

THE MASQUE IN SHAKESPEARE

by

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B.A., The University of British Columbia, 1958

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department
of
English

We accept this thesis as conforming to the
required standard.

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
August, 1963

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the dramatic function of the Court Masque in the plays of William Shakespeare and to determine how the integration of the masque, either in whole or in part, enhanced his plays both structurally and thematically.

The first chapter traces the development of the Court Masque from its introduction into the court as a recognizable form in 1512 to the highly elaborate productions of the Jacobean and Caroline periods. The emphasis is on the interrelationship between the masque and poetic drama and the use within the drama of certain qualities which had become associated with the masque. In the succeeding chapters, Shakespeare's plays are grouped according to what appears to be the most obvious function of the masque. This grouping is in no way categorical as the function which the masque fulfills is often two or three-fold. In Henry VIII, Romeo and Juliet, and The Merchant of Venice, the masque provides a cover for romantic intrigue and thus advances the plot. In addition to this an irony is established through the juxtaposition of the event and the conditions under which it takes place. Love's Labour's Lost, Timon of Athens and Much Ado About Nothing illustrate masque associations with frivolity and

affectation which reflect the unreal poses of the main characters. In these plays the denouement hinges upon the discovery of reality. Chapter IV deals with those plays which not only contain masque sequences but also reveal something of an over-all masque quality, plays in which the action moves through fleeting masque-like scenes to final order and harmony. The antimasque, though appearing in some plays previously mentioned, is examined in a separate chapter and its function and effectiveness assessed.

The thesis reveals that while increased elaboration of masque production provided Shakespeare with possibilities for more theatrical effects in the public theatre and led to a greater use of stage spectacle in the later plays, never is the masque used merely for stage effect even when this was the fashion followed by many other dramatists. The masque is integrated into the plot and its qualities adapted to reinforce the theme. Of the many influences, both contemporary and traditional, which stimulated Shakespeare's imagination, the masque was an important one. The masterful assimilation of the Court Masque contributes to the vitality and universality of the dramas and are a tribute to their author's genius and complete eclecticism.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Spectacle and pageantry, music and dance, mumming and disguising, poetry and song, allegorical and mythological interludes--in fact, all of the constituent elements which, when combined in varying proportions, went to make up the Elizabethan and Jacobean Court masque--had existed in, and been a part of, English ritual festivities and revels long before the masque emerged as an entertainment form. Indeed, "the essence of the masque which was the arrival of certain persons visored and disguised to dance a dance or present an offering"¹ had its origin "deep in the past, in folk custom and fertility rites."² In the ludi, which Enid Welsford sees emerging from those pagan rituals tolerated by the Christian Church³, can be seen characteristics which clung to folk and court entertainment into Tudor and Stuart times, and merged with foreign influences into a formal structure, the court masque. The mock combat of the sword dances and morris dances

¹Enid Welsford, The Court Masque, A Study in the Relationship between Poetry and the Revels, Cambridge, 1927, p. 19.

²A.C. Baugh et al, ed., A Literary History of England, New York, 1948, p. 569.

³The Court Masque, p. 20.

can be traced into the later allegorical assaults and the more formal dance performances. Elements of the King Game, particularly that of the Lord of Misrule, can be seen in the antimasque which, though not formally acknowledged as part of the masque until 1609, had its comic influence much earlier. Out of mumming came the elements of disguise and surprise, dancing and dicing, and gift-giving. The continued association of these entertainments with the most important events of the human condition kept strong their ritual features. The force of life and the abstract ideals which persisted in the masque when it showed its influence in the Shakespearean dramas drew vigour from these roots.

During the reign of Henry VIII allied forms of this festive art were drawn into a loose connection. Hall, in The Chronicles of the Reign, records that in 1512

the king with xi other wer disguised after the maner of Italie, called a maske. a thyng not seen afore in England . . . these maskers came in, with sixe gentlemen disguised in silke bearyng staffe torches, and desired the ladies to daunce, some wer content, and some that knew the fashion of it refused, because it was not a thyng commonly seen. And after thei danced and commoned together, as the fashion of the masks is, they take their leave and departed, and so did the Quene, and all the ladies.⁴

⁴Hall's Chronicle: Containing the History of England, during the Reign of Henry the Fourth and Succeeding Monarchs,

Though some scholars⁵ have seen this item as evidence of an entirely new form of entertainment, more detailed studies⁶ have shown that there was little new except the name 'maske' and the mingling of visored knights with the audience. To the Tudor custom of disguising had been added an Italian variation: the performers not only danced with the spectators but they 'commoned'. Hall indicates that the feelings toward this innovation were, at first, rather mixed. The opposition by respectable English society was short lived, however, and the 'taking out' of members of the audience by costumed or masked dancers became the climax of the fully-developed Court performance and the event from which it got its name. In addition to its importance in terms of form, this innovation introduced the dramatic motive of intrigue into what was, except for the element of impersonation, essentially an undramatic entertainment.

to the End of the Reign of Henry the Eighth, in Which are Particularly Described the Manners and Customs of those Periods, Printed for J. Johnson etc., 1809, London, p. 526.

⁵See A.M. Nagler, A Source Book in Theatrical History, p. 140; J.A. Symonds, Shakespeare's Predecessors, p. 255; Kenneth MacGowan and William Melnitz, The Living Stage, p. 184.

⁶See H.A. Evans, English Masques, intro. p. xxi; E.K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, Vol. I, p. 153; Enid Welsford, The Court Masque, p. 153.

It is necessary to stress that the masque was, from its inception, an amateur performance in which royal, noble or honoured personages took part. It is true that lusty young courtiers who developed the fad of invading the streets and 'gate-crashing' private parties to flirt and revel with the ladies, soon introduced the custom outside of court. It is also true that after the turn of the seventeenth century professional entertainers were employed to provide the comic or grotesque antimasque as contrast to the beauty and the splendour of the main part of the performance. But the masque proper remained primarily an aristocratic form of entertainment and this is probably one of the main reasons that the masque never quite succeeded in crossing the line separating amusement and art. To its participants and viewers, the fun of dressing up which the masque provided, of carrying on flirtatious intrigues, of impressing honoured guests, of escaping into a world of make-believe which they thought reflected the ideal state of their own society, led to its increasing popularity and to its increasing artificiality.

From the time of its introduction to the English court, then, the masque had certain elements of the dramatic. It first of all involved persons pretending to be other than they really were, and it also had the beginnings of dramatic motive, that of intrigue. There was still no narrative and there was

no speech other than the impromptu murmurings carried on during the commoning. T.M. Parrott notes, however, that as early as 1517 Cornish, a Master of the Revels, made an entrance before a royal gathering to introduce a group of noble entertainers. As presenter he spoke a Prologue in which he stated "the effect and the intent" of the Garden of Esperance.⁷ This introducing of performers soon developed a dramatic character and eventually dramatic action, but rarely did a theme dependent on the spoken word become the main business of the masque. During Elizabethan times the dance remained the important feature, even though the dance might be a symbolic representation of something else such as a procession, an assault, a tourney or a debate. In Jacobean times, spectacle came to the fore again even though the elements making up the spectacle might have been symbolically linked to a central theme. The masque episodes, in other words, became linked by a dramatic thread, but they never became drama.

With an eye to economy, Elizabeth I did little to advance the growth of the masque within her court but her progresses throughout her realm encouraged wealthy subjects to present elaborate entertainments in her honour. When out

⁷T.M. Parrott, "Comedy in the Court Masque: A Study of Ben Jonson's Contribution", PQ, XX (1941), p. 429.

of doors these entertainments took the form of tourneys, pageants or debates, all usually allegorical in substance and accompanied by music, which led up to the presentation of complimentary speeches or gifts to Her Majesty. Alice Venezky describes one of the more simple greetings which took place at Harefield Place. It was constructed along the lines of a dialogue between Time and Place:

Time then contended that Place was too small and insignificant to receive the Queen. In reply, Place pointed out that he had received the sun, which the sovereign Elizabeth resembled. A diamond heart was then presented to the Queen, as a mirror of the true heart of the donor.⁸

Generally speaking, however, the arrival of the Queen at a noble house called for much more elaborate celebrations and honours. These might include dialogue, but speech was subordinate to disguising and the dance. At indoor entertainments, Elizabeth received her tribute in the form of a masque. Compliments were included in the dramatic introduction of the masque dancers and a gift from her host was presented before they withdrew. Probably as a result of the influence of such poets as Sidney and Spenser these compliments soon took on a poetic quality of language and reflected the

⁸Alice S. Venezky, Pageantry on the Shakespearean Stage, New York, 1951, p. 80.

increasing interest in learning by many allegorical references to classical and mythological figures. As the weather or a request for a repeat performance might move these festivities in or out of doors, a pastoral setting was often used as it was readily adaptable. In addition to this, settings depicting an ideal Arcadian perfection, a "golden world", were eminently suitable to compliment the graces of Gloriana.

It is necessary to make some form of distinction between what E.K. Chambers calls the simple masque "in which the dancers, with their richly hued and sparkling costumes, their torch-bearers and their musicians, may be regarded as furnishing their own spectacle,"⁹ and the later, much more elaborate form because it was the simple masque which was used most often by William Shakespeare. Indeed, it may be said that, with the possible exception of the masque at the end of The Tempest, whenever the entertainment as such is used, either wholly or in part, it is in the simpler or Tudor form.

As the drama influenced the development of the masque, so the masque influenced drama. Sir Philip Sidney's playlet, The Lady of May, though not a masque in the strictest sense,

⁹E.K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, Vol. I, Oxford, 1925, p. 175.

has many masque-like qualities. Its main motive was to entertain Queen Elizabeth and, though it involved no dances, troops of contrasted performers pattern their actions throughout the slight narrative.

But The Lady of May for all its slightness was not without effect: Shakespeare transformed the schoolmaster into Holofernes; Jonson shows an indebtedness to it in his masques and entertainments; and such writers of pastoral drama as Jonson and Fletcher were guided by it. More important, for the first time one of these courtly entertainments was also good literature.¹⁰

George Peele's The Arraignment of Paris, written a few years later in the early 1580's, also may be called a masque-like pastoral drama. Again the drama was composed for presentation before the Queen and the author very neatly turns the classical myth into a vehicle for praise of the beauty of Elizabeth. When faced with the problem of altering Paris's decision as to who most justly deserves the golden apple inscribed, "Let this unto the fairest be," Diana decides that neither Juno, Pallas, nor Venus are worthy and presents it instead to Eliza, "the noble phoenix of our age." Though the play again contains no masque dances, the grouping and patterning of gods and goddesses, shepherds and knights, muses and fates, reveal the influence of the formal masque.

¹⁰E.W. Parks and R.C. Beatty, eds., The English Drama 900 - 1642, New York, 1935, p. 552.

A very similar patterned grouping of characters upon the stage can be seen in the early Shakespearean comedies. The masque itself within Love's Labour's Lost will be discussed in detail later, but the overall structure shows that Shakespeare was influenced by the patterning of movement in the courtly entertainments. Later, when his skill in handling comedy became greater, he altered the pattern and the formal balance. In As You Like It rather than even pairing, the pattern is asymmetrical.

And so I am for Phoebe
 And I for Ganymede.
 And I for Rosalind.
 And I for no woman.
 (V. ii. 91-4)¹¹

The reason for Shakespeare's choosing to limit his use of the masque disguises and dances to the simpler Tudor form lies, most probably, in the fact that he always had his eye on the public theatre. The more elementary the mechanics of the masque the easier they were to integrate into the plot, both structurally and thematically. Obviously for Shakespeare the play was "the thing", and although he was willing to try to please the public theatre audience with elements of the courtly form of entertainment, he was unwilling to allow them

¹¹Shakespeare: the Complete Works, edited by G.B. Harrison, New York, 1952. All quotations from Shakespearean plays are from this edition unless otherwise stated.

to overshadow the drama itself. This does not mean that the later form, called by E.K. Chambers the spectacular masque, "to which eclat is given by the pageant, mobile, or towards the end of the reign stationary, with its additional lights, its gilt and colours, and the elements of illusion and surprise afforded by its facilities for the concealed entry of personages,"¹² had no effect on the great dramatist. On the contrary, it is only necessary to notice the difference between the comparative simplicity of the early histories and the splendour of Henry VIII. Granted the stage directions for all the later plays are generally more explicit than in the earlier ones, in this play not a detail is omitted in the directions for the processional for the coronation of Anne Bullen, nor are the author's intentions left to chance in the ceremony of the masked figures in the vision of Queen Katharine. These influences were, however, most noticeable in production techniques or in staging rather than any greater elaboration of the masque sequences themselves.

Toward the end of the reign of Elizabeth, the masques had grown in popularity until they were the accepted method of entertainment at special events and festivals and their dramatic qualities were tuned to honour the host, any special guests, or

¹²The Elizabethan Stage, Vol. I, p. 175.

the principals involved in a particular celebration, such as a betrothal or a marriage. It was often thought politically expedient to try to outdo rivals for the Queen's favour by being more lavish in expressions of loyalty and admiration. A master for the revels became one of the most important servants in a wealthy man's employ. In addition to this, it became the practice to commission not only dancing masters to train the courtly performers but also well-known poets and musicians to compose the masque. Special rooms were designed to show off the entertainments to their best advantage, to elevate the performance to allow full and panoramic viewing. There can be no doubt that these developments speeded the evolution of the proscenium arch stage, as well as the use of stationary and moveable stage properties.

Enid Welsford cites the Shrovetide production of Proteus and the Adamantine Rock by the members of Gray's Inn for Queen Elizabeth in 1595 as the turning point in the history of the masque. This presentation, she says, established a norm in that, with the exception of an antimasque, it included all the elements which were later to be used by Ben Jonson and other masque writers during the Jacobean and Caroline periods.¹³

¹³The Court Masque, p. 163.

Written by Thomas Campion and Francis Davison, this production shows how much the court masque had absorbed of genuine drama:

First entered five musicians representing 'an Esquire of the Prince's Company, attended by a Tartarian Page. Proteus the Sea-God, attended by two Tritons. Thamesis and Amphitrite, who likewise were attended by their Sea-nymphs.' The nymphs and Tritons sang a song in praise of Neptune: . . . we learn that the Prince of Purpoole had caught Proteus, and refused to let him go, until he promised to bring to an appointed place the 'Adamantine Rock,' the magnetic cliff that brought with it the empire of the sea. But Proteus would only agree to this on condition 'That first the Prince should bring him to a Power, Which in attractive virtue should surpass The wondrous force of his Iron-drawing rocks.' The Prince of Purpoole and seven of his knights have allowed themselves to be shut into the rock as hostages, for the performance of this covenant, and now the moment of trial has come. Proteus descants on the magnetic virtue of the adamantine rock, but the squire points out that the rock may draw iron, but the Queen attracts to herself the hearts of men, and the human heart moves the arm that can wield iron. Proteus acknowledges himself defeated. . . . and then the Prince and the seven Knights issued forth of the rock, in a very stately mask, very richly attired, . . . At their first coming on the Stage, they danced a new devised measure, etc. After which, they took unto them Ladies; and with them they danced their galliards, courants, etc. And they danced another new measure; after the end whereof, the pigmies brought eight escutcheons, with the maskers devices thereupon, and delivered them to the Esquire, who offered them to her Majesty; which being done, they took their order again, and with a new strain, went all into the rock; at which time there was sung another new Hymn within the rock¹⁴

¹⁴John Nichols, The Progresses of Elizabeth as cited in The Court Masque by Enid Welsford, pp. 162-3.

There was first the presentation which was designed to introduce the players and give a reason for their coming. Note that this introduction establishes a narrative based on Classical mythology and includes fine compliments to the Queen. Next the masquers made their entry and performed the masque dances specially designed and executed for this performance. The masquers then chose partners from among the audience and danced with them. This section, usually referred to as the 'revels', included either well-known English country dances or continental innovations introduced by foreign ambassadors or by courtiers returning from abroad. As a finale, the masquers presented a token gift to the Queen and withdrew. This ceremonial reverence to the distinguished guest or to the host and company was sometimes referred to as the 'honour' and at other times as 'going up to state.'

In terms of dramatic characteristics, Proteus and the Adamantine Rock is unified by a dramatic thread and it is certainly activated by a theme. It may also be said to have a certain literary and poetic value. But it is still evident that the main emphasis is on the dance and on the performance for its entertainment value only. From this the emphasis may have shifted during the Jacobean and Caroline periods to a delight in spectacle but as far as the audience was concerned the basic purpose of the masque, flattering entertainment, never changed.

Proteus and the Adamantine Rock is also interesting in that it reveals the use of stage properties and a 'device' for the entrance and exit of the masquers. Most of these innovations in stage mechanics on the English boards had their origin in Italy where the masque form of entertainment had developed earlier. Some of them were copied from books of stage architecture published in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries,¹⁵ some were brought back by courtiers and imitated, and still others were brought to England by travelling companies of Italian players who enjoyed great popularity in both London and the provinces.

The masque, as a literary entertainment form, reached its fullest flowering at the extravagant court of James I. It continued on into the reign of Charles I but its brilliance was, by this time, self-consuming. The Masque of Blackness, produced in 1605, "marks an epoch in the history of the revels, because it is the beginning of the collaboration between Ben Jonson and the famous architect Inigo Jones."¹⁶ Together, they produced masques which came as close to literary art as the masque ever did. But the partnership was not to

¹⁵A.M. Nagler, A Source Book in Theatrical History, New York, 1952, passim. Not only abstracts but also valuable illustrations are given in this volume.

¹⁶Welsford, The Court Masque, p. 173.

last. The views of Jonson and Jones were diametrically opposed as to what the most important feature of the masque was. For Jonson masques were visualized and written as creations of inspiration; for Jones they were opportunities for brilliant architectural design. A description of the stage set of the Masque of Blackness will give an idea how far the element of spectacle had advanced by that date:

First, for the scene, was drawn a landt-schap consisting of small woods, and here and there a void place filled with huntings; which falling, an artificial sea was seen to shoot forth, as if it flowed to the land, raised with waves which seemed to move, and in some places the billows to break, as imitating that orderly disorder that is common in nature. In front of the sea were placed six Tritons, in moving and sprightly actions, their upper parts human, save that their hairs were blue, as partaking of the sea colour: their desonent parts, fish, mounted above their heads, and all varied in disposition Behind these a pair of sea-maids, for song, were as conspicuously seated; between which two great Sea-horses (as big as the life) put forth themselves . . .

These induced the Masquers, which were twelve Nymphs, Negroes, and the daughters of NIGER; attended by so many of the OCEANIAE, which were their light-bearers.

The Masquers were placed in a great concave shell, like mother of pearl, curiously made to move on those waters and rise with the billow; the top thereof was stuck with a chev'ron of lights, which indented to the proportion of the shell, strook a glorious beam upon them as they were seated one above the other: so that they were all seen, but in an extravagant order.

On sides of the shell did swim six huge Sea-monsters, varied in their shapes and dispositions, bearing on their backs the twelve torch-bearers, who were planted there in several graces

These thus presented, the Scene behind seemed a vast sea (and united with this that flowed forth) from the termination, or horizon of which (being the level of the State, which was placed at the upper end of the hall) was drawn by the lines of Perspective, the whole works shooting downwards from the eye; which decorum made it more conspicuous, and caught the eye afar off with a wandering beauty.¹⁷

The 1609 Twelfth Night Masque of Queens saw the acceptance of the 'antic' masque or antimasque which was designed to emphasize by contrast the beauty and splendour of the masque proper. The principle of contrast through the use of the grotesque had been part of disguising and the interlude before the innovation of the masque, but now it became an integral part of the court genre, usually coming just after the presentment and just before the entrance of the main masquers. The 'antic' actors were often employed from public theatrical groups and performed mainly grotesque dances or mimes, though later comic dialogue was added.

No one could have been more aware of the dangers of these excesses, of either stage spectacle or antics, than was

¹⁷Ben Jonson, edited by C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, Vol. VII, pp. 169-71.

Ben Jonson and his fears were justified for, despite all Jonson's protests, the potential inspiration of the poetry and dancing of the masque finally gave way to a performance which was almost wholly spectacle, an extravagant display of costume and stagecraft and bizarre, often ribald, antimasque. For all that they were magnificent to behold, they did little, if anything, to inspire.

But what of the writings of William Shakespeare? How far did the spectacle and antics of the courtly entertainments affect his presentations? In spite of the tremendous popularity of the masque during his lifetime, as far as is known, Shakespeare wrote no masques. He did not remain immune, however, to the increased theatrical possibilities which the masque offered nor was he unaware of the desire of the public theatre audiences for a taste of the courtly fare. In addition to this, the dramatic possibilities made it readily adaptable to serve a variety of purposes, realistic, ironic or satiric.

When the narrative development of Shakespeare's dramas could best be advanced by the direct inclusion of some form of the masque, it was usually integrated into a succession of scenes rather than appearing as one isolated sequence. As well, the masque action was designed in such a manner as either to sustain character impression already established or to develop it further. Shakespeare showed no reticence in

selecting only those sections of the entertainment form which best served the particular purpose required. This selection and integration, rather than mere interpolation, applies also to his implementation of the elements from the later, more spectacular, Jacobean masque.

The increased use of pageantry and procession, particularly in the chronicle plays, has already been noted. This pageantry was not, however, only for visual delight, but provided real dramatic value through the manner in which it was used. Alice Venezky points out a number of dramatic uses to which Shakespeare put this pageantry: for the depiction of proud characters, as in Coriolanus, Julius Ceasar, or Timon of Athens; for increasing the effectiveness of a climactic scene by leading up to, or framing it by ceremonious entry or procession, as in the expulsion of Falstaff at the end of Henry V, or the death of the "lass unparalleled" in the closing scene of Antony and Cleopatra, and so on.¹⁸

The stage directions for the masque-like dream of Posthumus in Cymbeline call for a mechanical descent of Jupiter "sitting upon an eagle." Later Jupiter's line,

¹⁸Venezky, Pageantry on the Shakespearean Stage, passim. Some of these illustrations and many others are given throughout Miss Venezky's book.

"Mount, eagle, to my palace crystalline" followed by the comment of Posthumus' father, "The marble pavement closes, he is entered / His radiant roof," suggests the use of a device like the 'adamantine rock' or the 'concave shell', the type of device used extensively to bring about the surprise entry of the masquers.

Often professional actors performed for the public, antimasques in which they had appeared in court. There is evidence of this in The Winter's Tale. The dance of the twelve Satyrs (IV. iv) has all the appearances of being interpolated into the play for a royal performance and then left in for the amusement of the Globe audience.

One three of them, by their own report,
 Sir, hath danced before the King, and not
 the worst of the three but jumps twelve
 foot and a half by the squier.
 (IV. iv. 345-8)

The sequence has such similarity to the antimasque in Jonson's Masque of Oberon that Shakespeare probably received the suggestion for the dance there. However, these dancing Satyrs do not form a contrast for any masque dance to follow; if anything they would contrast the gay festivities of the sheep-shearing scene which has just taken place.

More of these structural integrations will be referred to in the detailed studies of individual plays in which the

masque influence is most obvious, but these integrations apply not only to the 'body' of the masque, to use Ben Jonson's terms, but also to its 'soul'. The skillful weaving of device or form with dramatic or thematic purpose allowed for "no clash between what is shown to the eyes and what is intended to be seen in the mind and felt by the spirit and the imagination."¹⁹ In other words, whether Shakespeare used the earlier or later form, the masque or its elements became another dimension employed to preserve or develop the totality of impression.

The 'meaning' of a great play is the meaning that it takes the whole play to say, and the play is saying it through all its diversities, even, and sometimes especially, when it is not being said openly.²⁰

Assuming this statement of Neville Coghill's to be true, it is the phrase "when it is not being said openly" which leads to the problem of assessing what dramatic function the masque fulfilled in terms of the thematic manner in which it was used, what associative and connotative value it had in the Shakespearean plays.

¹⁹Allardyce Nicoll, Masks, Mimes and Miracles, London, 1931, p. 60.

²⁰Neville Coghill, "The Governing Idea: Essays in Stage-Interpretation of Shakespeare," SQ I (Vienna, 1946), p. 9.

There are some plays in which, it would appear, the main function depends on one of the masque's earliest dramatic characteristics, that of romantic intrigue. The suggestion that the entertainment is to act as a cover for events and actions which will lead to the deeper complications of the plot, immediately stimulates the mind of the audience to greater awareness of the minutest detail of movement or innuendo. The possibilities of irony are great in a situation where an event which should be one of festive harmony is used to contrast actions which signify rebellion or approaching disharmony.

Although it is unwise to force any rigid pattern or grouping upon the Shakespearean plays, there are certainly some in which the increasing amount of flattery associated with the masque is relied upon to conjure up in the mind insincerity and falsity, suspicions of excess, either of speech or action. These masque associations, romantic intrigue, excess and insincerity, establish a human situation of contrast between appearance and reality, between conditions as they seem to be, and as they really are. Both of these situations depend on qualities of the masque which are not essentially desirable, which imply a dissociation from actuality.

If the masque, however, developed from the same rituals, from the same basic rhythms of life as the drama did, then its roots could still nourish a sustained dramatic totality if properly tended. There is no doubt that the splendour and dignity of the masque made some impression on the mind, conscious or unconscious, of William Shakespeare. It is difficult to say how far his experiences affected his vision of life. There appear to be some plays which have an over-all, masque-like vision about them; where continually changing, fleeting spectacles do reflect the harmony essential to the well-spring of the masque. There are also certain instances in Shakespeare's plays when the dramatic action is suspended for a brief moment and a masque-like vision reveals an essential human truth or ideal which supersedes the theatre. For that brief moment the "soul" of the masque stands clearly before the mind's eye. Often when the most obvious purpose of the masque or any of its elements appears to be romantic intrigue or the exposing of false illusion, the masque is at the same time serving to direct the mind towards some desirable revelation.

CHAPTER II

ROMANTIC INTRIGUE

The court masque, was by its form and associations, readily adaptable for use as a cover for romantic intrigue. In the simpler Tudor masque the excitement came from participation in the revelry rather than from the performance of the dancers as stage spectacle. Though it involved a social situation which demanded a certain formality, the opportunities for advancing a private suit were many. Not only did the dancing and commoning provide possibilities for flirtatious whisperings but the wearing of face masks by the dancers, though not completely concealing identity, allowed for a boldness which normally decorum frowned upon.

Just such a situation occurs in the first Act of Henry VIII. Though this is a late play, first acted at the Globe in 1613, Shakespeare uses the simplest masque structure. The sequence (I.iv.49ff) is an almost direct adaptation of a 1517 masque described by George Cavendish in his Life of Wolsey¹ and Shakespeare's use of the early Tudor form is

¹George Cavendish, The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey, edited by Richard S. Sylvester and Davis P. Harding, New Haven, 1962, pp. 27-8.

certainly historically accurate. However, any plea that this was the reason for Shakespeare's utilization of such a simple type is offset by his obvious willingness to expand and change sources for other plays when it suited his purpose, and by his lack of concern for anachronisms elsewhere. It is more to the point to realize that the elaborate Jacobean masque was unnecessary in a play already made splendid by the colourful costumes and royal trappings provided by other lavish events. The text contains a number of elaborate stage directions for various scenes of pageantry and spectacle. The trial scene, the coronation of Anne Bullen, the vision of Queen Katharine, and the christening of the infant, Elizabeth, with its complimentary benediction, provide ample opportunity for brilliant display. Each entrance of either the King or Wolsey, with their attendants, occasions a fanfare and a vivid brief processional. To have included an elaborate masque, even as elaborate as some George Cavendish describes, would have 'gilded the lily' and diminished the dramatic effectiveness of the play. What was necessary at this point in the play was some device whereby the meeting of Henry and Anne Bullen could take place on stage. Dramatically no device could better serve this purpose than one whose associations with conspiracy and flirtation were clear to the audience. In addition to this, the element of intrigue, so essential to

the plot development which takes place within the masque, could easily have been obscured by the dazzling effect of the later masque form.

The introduction of the masque is inherent within the dialogue. After a flurry of trumpets and the discharge of the cannons have surprised the gathering into attention, Wolsey reassures the women, "Nay ladies, fear not / By all the laws of war you're privileged" (I.iv.51-2). His words set up the idea of assault which was a popular disguising and masque pattern and eminently suitable to the sweeping courtship which follows. A servant announces the "noble troop of strangers" who have arrived "as great ambassadors / From foreign princes" and the masquers, disguised as shepherds, enter. To the music of oboes they gracefully salute the Cardinal who sits alone under a state, the large canopy designed to set the host and any other high-ranking guests apart from the other banqueters.

The masque structure of the scene is obvious although only in the stage directions is the word actually used. The Lord Chamberlain, acting as presenter for the masquers declares their purpose is,

. . . having heard by fame
Of this so noble and so fair assembly
This night to meet here they could do no less,

Out of the great respect they bear to beauty,
 But leave their flocks, and under your fair conduct
 Crave to view these ladies and entreat
 An hour of revel with them.

(I.iv.66-72)

There are no masque dances and no songs but, with the Cardinal's consent, the masquers dance with the ladies. With the words "O Beauty, / Till now I never knew thee!" the disguised King chooses Anne Bullen as his partner. When one of the dancers is recognized as the King, all the masquers take off their visors and retire with the guests for more banqueting and dancing. The commoning or flirtation carried on by Henry and Anne goes beyond the bounds of the masque as the King continues to pay court to her, "I were unmannerly to take you out / And not to kiss you" (I.iv.95-6). A comparison of this act of courtship with the attitude during the wooing of Katharine of France in Henry V indicates that kissing was essentially an English custom added to the commoning, rather than a continental one.

The dramatic function of the masque, in Henry VIII, is basically quite simple. It provides the opportunity for the King to meet his next Queen, an opportunity which, as has already been pointed out, arises out of a situation associated with intrigue. Shakespeare adds to this the irony of having the meeting take place at the home of the man who was to become the King's most bitter antagonist. This irony

is compounded by the picture of great affluence and power in which Wolsey, the villain of the play, is placed for the scene. Wolsey is shown at the greatest height to which his greed for material possessions and ambition for power brought him. Even the physical positioning on the stage emphasizes the dignity of power and control which the Cardinal has. What better moment, dramatically, for the romantic meeting which will lead to the downfall of Wolsey and the church which he represents in England?

It is interesting to compare, briefly, the skillful integration of the masque, and the other stage pageantry and procession into the plot development and character presentation in Henry VIII with the effect of the masque-like marriage procession at the opening of Two Noble Kinsmen, a play produced in the same year. E.K. Chambers states that either Shakespeare or Fletcher might have written the opening of Scene One.² Considering the assimilation of procession and masque in Henry VIII and other plays which will be discussed, however, it seems hardly likely that Shakespeare could have written a scene in which

²E.K. Chambers, William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems, Oxford, 1930, Vol. 1, p. 532.

HYMEN with a torch burning: a Boy, in a
 white Robe . . . : a Nymph, encompassed
 in her Tresses, bearing a wheaten Garland
 two Nymphs with wheaten chaplets
 on their heads and another hold-
 ing a Garland³

are left standing about a flower-strewn stage while three
 Queens in black plead for the bones of their dead Kings.
 There appears to have been no dramatic reason for beginning
 the play with this marriage procession other than an obvious
 appeal to the audience through spectacle.

The masque is used as a vehicle for intrigue and
 romance in Romeo and Juliet, but the integration is again
 much more than a purely structural one and is much more
 suitable than at first meets the eye.

The lines from the Arthur Brooke poem, "The Tragicall
 Historie of Romeus and Juliet," Shakespeare's immediate
 source, show that the idea of the masked entry of Romeo into
 the Capulet household was not original with Shakespeare:

Yong damsels thether flocke, of bachelors a rowte,
 Not so much for the banquets sake, as beauties to
 search out.
 But not a Montegew would enter at his gate,

³John Fletcher and William Shakespeare, Two Noble Kinsmen,
The English Drama 900-1642, edited by E.W. Parks and R.C.
 Beatty, New York, 1935, p. 1064.

For as you heard, the Capilets, and they were at
 Save Romeus, and he in maske with hidden face, ^{debate,}
 The supper done, with other five dyd prease into ^{the place.}⁴

Neither, as Geoffrey Bullough shows, was the idea original with Brooke. What each author did was to up-date the event to suit the entertainment of his particular age. So Shakespeare added the machinery of the Tudor masque to the Brooke disguising.

To have the conventional Cupid, as presenter, precede the young adventurers into the Capulet ballroom is scorned by Benvolio as being out of date:

Th date is out of such prolixity.
 We'll have no Cupid hoodwinked with a scarf,
 Bearing a Tartar's painted bow of lath,
 Scaring the ladies like a crow-keeper;
 Nor no without-book prologue, faintly spoke
 After the prompter for our entrance.
 (I.iv.3-8)

They have no intention of entertaining the guests with masque dances; they merely plan to attend the party to meet the ladies and "measure them a measure". Being heavy-hearted with melancholy, Romeo refuses to dance, but he agrees

⁴ Arthur Brooke, "The Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Juliet", as given in Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, edited by Geoffrey Bullough, Vol. I, p. 290.

to act as torchbearer for his friends. Just the preparation for the masque invasion alone, then, has provided not only a purpose for the entertainment, to lift the spirits of the love-sick Romeo, but also a way for the audience's attention to be focused on the hero. He will appear set apart from the others on the stage.

In modern editions of Romeo and Juliet, after Romeo's brief foreshadowing of disaster

. . . . For my mind misgives
Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels,
(I.iv.106-9)

the masquers march off stage and Scene Four closes. Scene Five opens in the Capulet ballroom. In the First Folio, however, the group do not leave the stage. They march about the stage to the accompaniment of the drums. This type of action was used on the Shakespearean stage to suggest the brief passage of time but, in this case, it also holds the events of the masque much more compactly together than the modern editions suggest.

In terms of plot development, the visit of Romeo and his friends to the Capulet festivity provides the opportunity for the meeting of the "star-cross'd lovers", but the drama

of the situation is intensified by the double irony which the encounter furnishes: first, the love between Romeo and Juliet is conceived under a hostile roof, and second, under the same circumstances, Tybalt swears the revenge that causes the disastrous turn of events which ultimately destroys the young lovers. Love and hate, the opposing forces upon which the entire play is constructed, stand boldly out against the backdrop of music, dancing and revelry.

These two emotions have previously appeared before the audience but only as pale shadows when compared with the intensity of the passions which flare during the masque scene. The Prologue first previews the course of the drama and presents the theme of love versus hate. The action then opens with scenes revealing the condition of the ancient quarrel between the Montagues and the Capulets. It might easily be questioned what kind of hatred this is that is couched in the jokes and puns of servants or depends for its leadership on old men who should be fighting with crutches rather than swords. The peaceable Benvolio can see the foolishness of hasty actions based on the remnants of an "ancient grudge" and appeals for reason. That reason will not prevail is made evident by the actions of Tybalt whose blind rage stirs the smoldering ashes of the feud. The rigid form of autocratic

justice with which the Prince of Verona meets the situation might also be questioned as to its reasonableness. Execution as punishment for disturbing the peace only adds the threat of further violence to already hostile circumstances. The infatuation which Romeo feels for Rosaline is, too, just a pale shadow of the love which he experiences with Juliet. He is going through the actions of love just as the rival families are going through the actions of hatred. His courtly love demands sadness and anguish of its devotee; it is not the true love which gives joy and ecstasy. In other words, it is not until the masque sequence that genuine feelings appear at all. The innocence and joy of new love is marred by the intrusion of the old hate in the form of Tybalt. But Capulet meets this intrusion with reasonableness and the demand for moderate and just behaviour. The ideal outcome of the play can be envisioned right here: pure and true love allowed to flower and violent hatred curbed by reasoned judgement. The scene thus fulfills the conditions of the true essence of the masque as Jonson conceived it:

The particular kind of action proper to the form resides in the symbolic representation of contrasted conditions, usually of order or virtue as opposed to disorder and depravity.⁵

⁵Dolores Cunningham, "The Jonsonian Masque as a Literary Form", ELH, Vol. XXII (1955), p. 108.

That music should be playing in the background when such an ideal is presented is rather typical of Shakespeare who so often used music to reinforce the theme of the play. In fact the patterned movement of the dance and the rhythms of the music provide a synthesizing accompaniment to the poetry of the masque scene. Enid Welsford takes The Tempest as the play which best illustrates the fusion of the artistic harmonies which went to make up the masque, which shows what the masque might have become.⁶ But surely here, in a play as early as Romeo and Juliet, can be seen the beginnings of the correlation of poetry, music and dance achieved in the later Shakespearean play, but never quite achieved in the court masque.

Capulet's welcome to his guests and the masquers serves as an overture to the main theme. Gay reminiscences are exchanged to the tune of music and the patterned crossings of vivid costumes. Against this brilliant display, the figure of Romeo stands out, his face illumined by the torch he carries. His words, when he speaks, sound the love theme in melodious rhymed couplets:

⁶Welsford, The Court Masque, p. 349.

Oh, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
 It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
 Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear-
 Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!
 (1. v. 46-9)

The long vowels and sweeping lines contrast the clipped staccato phrasings of Tybalt who voices the counter-point of hatred.

This, by his voice, should be a Montague.
 Fetch me my rapier, boy. What dares the slave
 Come hither, covered with an antic face,
 To fleer and scorn at our solemnity?
 (1. v. 56-9)

The crescendo reached in the violent exchange between Tybalt and Capulet foreshadows the impulsive anger of Capulet when he is crossed or his authority questioned, an anger which otherwise might seem quite unreasonable when Juliet threatens rebellion later in the play. His words vary quickly from gay reassurance and encouragement to his guests to low outraged commands to his nephew. This whole exchange is superimposed upon the slow stately movement of the measure or, perhaps, the livelier pavan.

The exit of Tybalt leaves Romeo and Juliet to enjoy the full attention of the audience unchallenged. Their love duet takes the form of a sonnet. Each speaks a quatrain and then they share the third quatrain and the rhymed couplet.

The commoning is delicately flirtatious and eminently suitable to its musical accompaniment. It ends abruptly with the finish of the dance and Lady Capulet's summons to Juliet. The masquers decline Capulet's invitation to banquet and quickly quit the house.

Now it is true that the music and dancing add vitality and colour to the performance, but never, throughout the entire masque, is the emphasis on the entertainment itself. The structure remains, most obviously, a device for plot development, but it also provides, on closer analysis, a background for further character development and substantial thematic reinforcement.

The type of entertainment planned for in Act Two of The Merchant of Venice is, again, the earlier form of Tudor masque, and, as in the other plays mentioned, the most obvious dramatic function is to provide a cover for romantic intrigue. In this play, however, detailed instructions are given as to the preparation for the masque, but the actual entertainment does not take place. In fact, as soon as the completed preparations have provided the plot development machinery, the masque is abandoned.

An atmosphere of merry-making and youthful fun is established at the opening of Act II, Scene iv, as Lorenzo

and his friends make their plans for an entertainment to follow the banquet which Bassanio is to give.

Nay, we will slink away in supertime
Disguise us at my lodging, and return
All in an hour.

(II. iv. 1-3)

Their lack of the required torchbearers is remedied by Lancelot Gobbo and the letter from Jessica which he delivers to Lorenzo. Jessica's willingness to disguise herself as a page and elope with Lorenzo while her father is away at Bassanio's banquet, presents a possibility which appeals to Lorenzo's "skipping spirit."

Will you prepare for this masque⁷ tonight?
I am provided of a torchbearer.

(II. iv. 23-4)

Ironically, in the next scene, Shylock, on hearing that a masque is to be performed at Bassanio's feast, warns Jessica to "lock up his doors" and avoid contact with the

⁷Even though it shows remarkable inconsistency, the Harrison edition spelling of this word has been retained in all quotations. The French form, used for clarity throughout the text of this paper, does not appear to have been adopted until the early 1600's, yet Harrison uses it in a play as early as Henry VI, Part III (1591-92); whereas he uses 'mask' in Love's Labour's Lost (1588-93). The First Folio (1623) uses 'maske' throughout.

"shallow foppery" sounding of drums and the "wry-necked fife", practiced by "Christian fools with varnished faces."

It is not until the end of Scene Six that the suspense as to just how far Lorenzo is willing to carry this ironic joke on Shylock, is broken. His

. . . . On gentlemen, away!
Our masquing mates by this time for us stay,
(I. vii. 58-9)

would imply that he is prepared to parade the disguised Jessica directly under her father's unwitting eyes. Dramatically, however, the time is not ready for Shylock to be ridiculed to this extent. The masque ruse has provided the opportunity for the successful elopement and now may be abruptly dismissed with

No masque tonight. The wind is come about,
Bassanio will presently go abroad.
(I. vii. 64-5)

Since the elopement episode was added by Shakespeare, however, it is wise to investigate this sub-plot episode further. Rarely in a Shakespearean play does a device serve a single simple purpose; most often it provides a reinforcement, an ironic parallel, or a foreshadowing of the theme and outcome of the main narrative. So the masque conspiracy is

much more important than a first glance might indicate. It establishes the complete isolation of Shylock, provides motivation for his future actions, and, what is more important, parallels the ultimate outcome of the bond story, albeit in a lighter vein.

As Graham Midgley observes, Shylock is cast as the outsider right from the beginning of the play, "all he is and all he holds dear is alien to the society in which he has to live."⁸ He has been shunned, spat upon, declared intolerable and his desire to seek some retribution for abuses both personal and racial is not, in his terms, unjustifiable. That his hatred for the society which is represented by Antonio is of long standing, is evident from his own words:

How like a fawning publican he looks!
 I hate him for he is a Christian,
 But more for that in low simplicity
 He lends out money and brings down
 The rate of usance here with us in Venice,
 If I can catch him once upon the hip,
 I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.
 (I. iii. 42-8)

It is not until the masque ruse, however, that an offence occurs which causes an injury wounding enough to motivate the type of revenge which he tries to achieve in the trial scene.

⁸Graham Midgley, "The Merchant of Venice: A Reconsideration," Essays in Criticism, Vol. X (1960), p. 122.

I do not feel that in the bond agreement made in Act I, Scene iii, there is any intimation from the dialogue that Shylock desires any more than to humiliate Antonio as he has been humiliated; to make Antonio beg for money. This plan fails but he does make Antonio agree to an extravagant bond in return for the favour of his money, a concession which almost fulfills the same purpose. Antonio must deal with Shylock, at least this once, on the Jew's terms.

Midgley calls this bond agreement Shylock's "offer of friendship by which he tries to escape from his isolation by means of the only common link between himself and his enemies, his wealth."⁹ Such a statement can hardly be true in view of the fact that at this point Shylock's isolation is not yet complete. There are two things which keep him from being absolutely alone, those two things which, in fact, he most "holds dear." The first is the means through which the Venetian society must communicate with him, his wealth, and the other is his daughter.

Now, through his masque ruse scheme, Lorenzo gains the hand of the fair Jessica. In addition to this his torch-bearer comes to him self-dowered with a casket of Shylock's

⁹Ibid., p. 130.

jewels and "gilded" with his ducats. The praise which Jessica receives for her act, that she is surely "a Gentile, and no Jew", indicates how completely she has joined the Christian fold.

My daughter! Oh, my ducats! Oh, my daughter!
Fled with a Christian!

(II. viii. 15-16)

sums up the seriousness with which Shylock views the injuries that he has suffered through the conspiracy. He has now lost his wealth and his daughter. These words are not, however, spoken directly by Shylock, but put into the mouth of Salarino so that exaggerated delivery can increase the ridicule of the Jew and the laughter of the audience. In the eyes of the antagonists within the play, and of the spectators in the theatre, he is the butt of a huge joke.

The narrative and thematic resolution of the bond story is an elevation and extension of the masquing scene, but the situation involving gold, flesh, blood, and revenge for insult is not so funny when it becomes obvious in the trial scene which, between his daughter and his ducats, is the more important to Shylock, or which loss caused the greater injury to his personal and racial pride. Shylock refuses to accept the three thousand ducats and demands his right to the letter of the bond.

The pound of flesh which I demand of him
Is dearly bought. 'Tis mine, and I will have it.

The pattern of the final outcome of the trial scene is the same as in the masquing ruse. Shylock is defeated by a trick; he suffers great loss, and he is brought to humiliation. He loses his gold, this time all of it; he must acknowledge, through his will, the diversion of his daughter; he must humble himself and kneel for mercy. Shylock becomes, then, a complete pharmokos figure, stripped and driven out from the society in which he is the disrupting or inharmonious element. Certainly there is, as Neville Coghill mentions, the possibility of eventual inclusion upon his acceptance of Christianity¹⁰, but this does not change the fact that at the end of the bond story Shylock is alien to the world of harmony as it is portrayed at Belmont in Act Five.

The masque preparation scene, then, is much more than an interesting and amusing diversion integrated into the plot merely to act as a cover for the elopement. It provides another important step in the isolation of Shylock. He is, after the conspiracy, quite alone; only the loss of his wealth remains to complete his defeat. What had been an

¹⁰Coghill, "The Governing Idea: Essays in Stage-Interpretation of Shakespeare," p. 12.

"ancient grudge" is, by the actions of his daughter, enkindled into a desire to seek revenge for her shame at all cost. Shylock suffers a loss and a humiliation which foreshadow his ultimate downfall.

It has been particularly noted in these plays that the structural integration of the masque allowed the masque to take place as part of the action rather than isolated from it. The plot complication which motivated the main action occurred within the masque framework. Of much more subtle artistry and in keeping with the masque as it was conceived by Jonson, however, is the visual impression which the masque offers, the sudden fleeting foreshadowing of the outcome or a brief glimpse of the over-all conflict upon which the theme is based. How much of this total assimilation of the masque is the result of conscious effort is impossible to decide, but certainly this can be said: the masque, when it was used by Shakespeare in a play served a variety of functions, never merely a single purpose; and the most subtle of its functions was often as important as its most obvious.

CHAPTER III

ILLUSION

The very essence of disguise or make-believe, so integral to the masque, could do little more than become, in many instances, an even greater extension of the unreality which its "insubstantial pageants" presented. As the quality of improvisation disappeared and the entertainment became more lavish, it also became more self-adulatory. With this self-adulation came a further dissociation from life, a greater detachment from actual existence. Rather than fulfilling any serious artistic purpose, such as comic or tragic drama might, the end of the masque was often nothing more than a form of self-indulgence or high-flown flattery.

Connotations of shallow frivolity and insincerity are assumed by Shakespeare when the word masque is used. The words of the French King in King Henry VI, Part Three:

Then, England's messenger, return in post
And tell the false Edward, thy supposed King,
That Lewis of France is sending over masquers
To revel with him and his new bride,
(III. iii. 222-5)

are spoken in contempt for the wanton revels of the English court and for the English King whose wanton revels are worth

no more than the flirtatious whisperings of the masquer. Again, the Bastard, in King John, treats the Dauphin of France as a boy playing at make-believe war with a mock army.

This apish and unmannerly approach
 This harnessed masque and unadvised revel,
 This unhaired sauciness and boyish troops,
 The King doth smile at, . . .
 (V. ii. 131-4)

Cassius, in Julius Caesar, remains true to his stern, unsmiling nature when he derides Octavius Caesar as "a peevish schoolboy" who chooses to associate with the gay Mark Antony, "a masker and a reveller!"

In Timon of Athens the extent to which Timon and his court are removed from reality and their delight in catering to the senses reaches its zenith in the masque which his fawning lords present for his entertainment and for the flattering of his ego. Thus an episode which might otherwise have been construed as a concession to the public theatre audience's desire to enjoy an entertainment usually restricted to the court, is, through association, integrated into the theme as well as the structure of the play.

G. Wilson Knight, in his essay on Timon of Athens, has dealt in great detail with the methods used by Shakespeare to build up the whole atmosphere of affluence and sensuous

display which surrounds the court.¹ Again and again the dialogue expresses Timon's wealth and generosity:

He pours it out. Pluto, the God of Gold,
Is but his steward. No meed but he repays
Sevenfold above itself, no gift to him
But breeds the giver a return exceeding
All use of quittance.

(I. i. 287-91)

The Poet extols his patron in verse; the Painter delights in producing his likeness; the finest wares of the Jeweller and the Merchant are set aside just for him. "All these things, gifts of Fortune to those she wafts to her with her 'ivory hand', building up an atmosphere of visual delight."² Even the signal note of warning that Fortune can quickly change her mood and favour is lost in the trumpet flourish which announces the entry of Timon and his entourage of followers and servants into the hall.

The initial actions of Timon do nothing to diminish the whole impression of affluence and patronage already established. With magnificent generosity he saves Ventidius from disgrace and solves Lucilius' matrimonial problems, both

¹G. Wilson Knight, The Wheel of Fire, Oxford, 1930, p. 207.

²Ibid., p. 209.

from coffers which he and his friends believe bottomless. There is certainly no reason to doubt Timon's sincerity when he states his belief, "'Tis not enough to help the feeble up, / But to support him after" (I. i. 107-8). In fact, it is perhaps this naive sincerity which first indicates Timon's separation from his cohorts, a separation which later becomes complete isolation.

The probable staging of the masque scene itself presents interesting possibilities for analysing its dramatic function. In the first place, none of the main characters actually take part in the masque, as they do in Henry VIII or in Love's Labour's Lost in which the emphasis is on actions within the masque. Nor, as in Romeo and Juliet, is the masque used as a backdrop for the action. Rather, the entertainment seems to have been presented front stage between Timon and his banqueting friends, and the theatre audience. The emphasis, then, appears to be on the masque itself: first, as a further strengthening of the appeal to the senses; and secondly, on its actual form and structure.

As there are no scene breaks in the First Folio, it is the loud music of the oboes which indicates the beginning of the masque sequence. The stage directions, "A great banquet served in," suggest that the laden table was set up

on an inner stage or some modification thereof. Thus, the sudden drawing of the curtains would reveal visual evidence of the opulence of Timon's court which had been established before by the imagery and exhibited by the actions and the dialogue.

The arrival of the masquers is announced to Timon and his parasites. Cupid may have been chosen as presenter because this figure was popular in court presentations, but I think it more likely that Shakespeare saw the irony of using the allegorical personification of love and devotion in these circumstances. Cupid declares how "ample" Timon is "beloved:"

Hail to thee, worthy Timon! And to all
 That of his bounties taste! The five best Senses
 Acknowledge thee their patron, and come freely
 To gratulate thy plenteous bosom. Th' Ear
 Taste, Touch and Smell, pleased from thy table rise.
 They only now come to feast thine eyes.
 (I. ii. 128-33)

He ushers in a masque of Amazon ladies who play upon their lutes and dance before the guests. This use of female dancers entertaining male guests is an interesting reversal. It might be, as this is a later play, that the practice of Queen Anne to enter into masques had influenced the writer, or, more likely, as Allison Gaw suggests, the female dancers were introduced to relieve the pervasive masculinity of the

play.³ The dramatic effect is strongly reinforced by this reversal, and it continues. The guests, the Lords, "rise from the table with much adoring of Timon", approach the masquers and dance "a lofty strain or two to the hautboys". Rather than the male masquers breaking ranks and seeking partners from the onlookers, as was the normal masque practice, the entire situation is changed and the male onlookers rise from their places and seek out partners from among the female masquers.

After the revels are over and Cupid and the Amazon ladies have withdrawn for refreshments, the gift-giving takes place. Again the normal procedure is reversed for the honoured host presents rich jewels to his guests, gifts which stand out in marked contrast to those which Timon receives. Just as it has been revealed that the masque itself was Timon's "own device" so the gifts which he receives are really nothing more than token returns from wealth which Timon has himself bestowed. In neither case do his followers give anything of themselves except the gesture, the show. The gifts, accompanied by flattery, are symbolic of the tawdry extravagances of the court. The admiration and honour which the

³Allison Gaw, "The Impromptu Masque in Shakespeare", Shakespeare Association Bulletin, Vols. XI-XII (1936-37), p. 150.

courtiers declare are merely reflections of the glittering gems and silver. When the gems and silver are no more, the declarations of esteem also disappear. The whole atmosphere and condition, for all its opulence, are distorted. Only the interruptions by Apemantus' churlish, abrupt remarks:

Like madness is the glory of this life,
 As this pomp shows to little oil and root.
 We make ourselves fools to disport ourselves,
 And spend our flatteries to drink those men
 Upon whose age we void it up again
 With poisonous spite and envy,
 (I. ii. 139-44)

and Flavius' asides reveal the truth of the situation.

The masque, which is in itself a form of flattery and a representation of unreality, increases Timon's appetite for adulation. The sequence not only completes the picture suggested in Scene One of Timon's dependence on voiced praise and voiced friendship, on visible proof of esteem and visible proof of loyalty, but also lays the groundwork for his later fall from position and for his inability to face reality.

Using Apemantus' words "the extremity of both ends", Mark van Doren views Timon of Athens as a play which shows no mean, no middle ground. "Timon passes," says van Doren, "from the extreme of prodigality to the extreme of misanthropy."⁴

⁴Mark van Doren, Shakespeare, New York, 1939, p. 249.

The masque is certainly the symbol of the state of prodigality. The state of misanthropy is symbolized in a parallel banqueting scene in Act Three. In this sequence, Timon serves his guests dishes which are as empty as their high-flown words of praise and platters as nourishing and sustaining as their friendship had been. If Timon's world of illusion was epitomized in the masque scene, his world of disillusion is epitomized in this.

May you a better feast never behold,
 You knot of mouth friends! Smoke and lukewarm water
 Is your perfection. This is Timon's last.
 Who stuck and spangled you with flatteries
 Washes it off, and sprinkles in your faces
 Your reeking villainy.

(III. iv. 98-102)

In Love's Labour's Lost there is also an atmosphere of unreality which pervades the court of Navarre. In fact, the whole attitude of the young gentlemen, whether they be swearing to dissociate themselves from their "own affections" and the "huge army of the world's desires", or setting off in high confidence to "woo these girls of France", is one of unnaturalness and affectation. Critics of this play have seen this unnaturalness and affectation as being the result of Shakespeare's attempt to combine a type of entertainment for a restricted audience and a dramatic structure for public performances. Many have denied it a place not only as comedy

but also as drama.⁵ They seem to take Shakespeare quite literally in Berowne's complaint:

Our wooing doth not end like an old play.
Jack hath not Jill. These ladies' courtesy
Might well have made our sport a comedy.
(V. ii. 884-6)

Most of the earlier criticism stems from viewing the play purely in terms of theatricality, or from comparing its contrived composition with later plays of more subtle artistry and certainly, in the narrowest sense, little objection may be made to these assessments. The play abounds in topical references, vague allusions, obscure personalities and contemporary puns and jokes which have been the despair of critics who have tried to turn it into an Elizabethan gossip column. Stringing together popular sixteenth-century pastimes--the dances, the Masque of the Muscovites, the show of the Nine Worthies, the pageant of Spring and Winter--on a plot which is basically lacking in action gives to the play a music-hall quality, song and dance interspersed with glib dialogue. The ending of the play is, though thematically sound, rather abrupt and anticlimactic.

⁵See F.E. Halliday, Shakespeare and His Critics, London, 1949, pp. 57, 153-5; Coleridge's Writing on Shakespeare, Terrence Hawkes, ed., New York, 1959, p. 108.

Shakespeare's deliberate use of existing dramatic forms and method cannot be denied but the reassessment of Love's Labour's Lost by more modern critics has shifted the emphasis away from these obvious contrivances to the less obvious adaptations of the author, the subtle manipulations of these existing forms to suit a particular Shakespearean purpose. The contrapuntal structure, the static scenes of wit and the euphuistic language are clearly identifiable but there is a sense of mockery in their deliberate use, perhaps a reaction to the courtly expectation and acceptance of the sophisticated games.

The masque of the Muscovites is one of the best examples of a form of entertainment not so much used as manipulated.

For revels, dances, masques, and merry hours
 Forerun fair Love, strewing her way with flowers,
 (IV. iii. 379-80)

announces the intentions of the King of Navarre to make mock assault on the tents of the Princess of France where she and her ladies are encamped in the royal park. Preceded by "blackamoors with music" the masquers, disguised as the Russian traders with whom the Elizabethan court was so familiar, enter with their presenter, Moth, who begins a grand

complimentary speech to the ladies. But what was intended as stock entertainment almost immediately breaks down and the masque becomes a travesty. The element of surprise has been destroyed by Boyet and poor Moth's fine phrases dwindle off into embarrassed confusion as the ladies turn their backs on him and will not listen. The gentlemen, denied their opportunity to show off their masque dances, advance to "tread a measure" with the ladies but again the masque protocol is broken. The ladies refuse to dance. They do consent to common but, as each couple "converse apart", what should be a flirtatious exchange turns into a battle of wits in which the men suffer complete defeat and are forced to withdraw.

Now what particular dramatic purpose has been served by this deliberate distortion of the masque structure? Even were love not involved in the dramatic situation it would be expected that the King provide entertainment for such visiting nobility as the Princess of France. But love is involved and the masque is to serve a double purpose. It is to entertain and it is to promote the suits of the young men as they "woo by the book". The entertainment is make-believe and their attitude to courting is make-believe and both break down before the ladies' determination to have nothing to do with such insincerity. The presenter does not present, the masque

performers do not perform, the revellers do not revel, and so on, because the lovers do not really love. These young men are no "humble-visaged suitors" but artificial young sophisticates who are playing parts. As each lady singles out her partner in the wooing farce she establishes the juxtaposition between what he seems to be and what he really is. Maria's clear-sighted analysis of Longaville:

A man of sovereign parts he is esteemed,
Well fitted in arts, glorious in arms
Nothing becomes him ill that he would well.
The only soil of his fair virtue's gloss,
Is a sharp wit matched with too blunt a will,
Whose edge hath power to cut, whose will still wills
It should none spare that come within his power,
(II. i. 44-51)

is paralleled with comic repetition by Katharine of Dumain and Rosalind of Berowne. After the entrance of the King and his followers the action may be likened to that of comic choruses, each advancing and retreating with patterned sallies. The wit of the ladies with its certain edge of reality and uncompromising logic cuts through the web of artifice and emerges victorious with unfailing regularity. The young men, deceived by the exchange of their jewel-gifts, "a huge translation of hypocrisy", are, in fact, making love to illusions. "Then we, / Following the signs, wooed but the sign of she." (V. ii. 469)

The masque sequence in Love's Labour's Lost, then, fulfills a similar function, in a comic vein, as it does in Timon of Athens. It represents a state of unreality but, unlike its use in the later and much more serious play, it also contains the rejection of that unreality. The ladies refuse to play at love and the gentlemen suffer a defeat which teaches them a lesson. Love is more than a courtly game. At the end of the play each of the suitors must do some service to prove that his love is steadfast.

The spirit of festivity inherent in the masque movement is repeated with a difference when the lovers return to the park without their disguises. Rosalind dispels any thoughts they may have entertained of success and Berowne, humbled, confesses his willingness to strip off the insincerities of love in which they had been indulging in the masque, a confession which sounds remarkably like it might be the author's own opinion of the practices in court entertainments:

Oh, never will I trust to speeches penned,
Nor to the motion of a school-boy's tongue,
Nor never come in vizard to my friend,
Nor woo in rhyme, like a blind harper's song!
Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,
Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation,
Figures pedantical--these summer flies
Have blown me full of maggot ostentation.
I do foreswear them, and I here protest,
By this white glove--how white the hand, God knows!
Henceforth my wooing mind shall be expressed

In russet yeas and honest kersey noes.
 And, to begin, wench--so God help me, la!
 My love to thee is sound, sans crack or flaw.
 (V. ii. 402-415)

But Rosalind, the Princess and the other ladies have heard oaths and protestations before and find this announcement equally unbelievable. "Your oath broke once, you force not to foreswear." The mocking tone sweeps on into the pageant and the action becomes almost boisterous, in spite of Holofernes' plea, "This is not generous, not gentle, not humble."

It is not until the entrance of Mercade that the facade of mockery and insincerity is stripped away. With this sudden entrance of death into the high-spirited, almost hysterical revelry of the Park, reality intrudes with stunning impact upon the feverish abandonment of the courtly gathering. The distortion and confusion of the masque and the pageant, the artificiality and affectation of both the performances and their participants are suddenly replaced by the facts of life and death. The mockery of life and love has been forced to give way to life itself.

E.K. Chambers points out another masque-like element which might possibly be read into the closing lines of Love's Labour's Lost. He notes that "the abrupt ending, 'The words

of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo', . . . looks like the beginning of an epilogue or presenter's speech for a following mask."⁶ If this is the case the exit line which follows, "You that way--we this way", would appear to separate the performers; the "you" referring to the masquers proper, and the "we" referring to the actors of the pageant. As most critics agree that this play was written to be performed before a noble gathering, the possibilities are strong that the roles of the masquers were taken by members of the courtly group, whereas the roles of the Nine Worthies would be played by some type of professional performers.⁷ Such an inclusion of professionals into what was primarily an amateur court performance would be a very early example of an antimasque, an addition to the masque proper which was not produced until the early 1600's.

The comic element which, in Love's Labour's Lost, lies in the revelation of the absurdity involved in trying to escape from the normal forces of love and life, is much more clearly sportive in the Beatrice-Benedick plot of the later

⁶E.K. Chambers, William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems, Vol. I, p. 338.

⁷Austin K. Gray, "The Secret of Love's Labour's Lost", P.M.L.A., Vol. XXXIX (1924), p. 603.

play Much Ado About Nothing. The similarities between Rosalind and Berowne from the earlier play and Beatrice and Benedick in the later one are almost too obvious to do more than note that the earlier couple are but pale shadows of the later.

"Shakespeare came to Much Ado About Nothing, which some believe to be Love's Labour's Won, with a far finer sense for the delicious entanglements of intrigue, and a ripened humour which makes the eaves-dropping scenes in Leonato's orchard a joy forever."⁸ In fact, the delightful flight from and to the entanglements of romance by Beatrice and Benedick, involve the attention of the audience to such a degree that the more serious plot involving Hero and Claudio is often wished away in order to follow their verbal skirmishes to their inevitable mutual submission.

The masque scene in the play involves both plots. In fact all of the major figures in the play are present in the hall in Leonato's house when the host calls, "The revelers are entering, Brother. Make good room." With Don Pedro, the highest ranking noble of the group, to lead them, the various couples mask and "walk about" or dance a measure. Between the first three couples, Don Pedro and Hero, Balthasar and Margaret, and Antonio and Ursula, the light banter is delicate

⁸E.K. Chambers, Shakespeare: A Survey, New York, (1925), p. 131.

and flirtatious; but, in contrast, the barbed repartee between Beatrice and Benedick gives no quarter and reveals two very dominant characters, one hardly likely to give in easily to the other. Beatrice's comments to Benedick on the sharpness of his wit might easily have been made by Rosalind on Berowne:

Why, he is the Prince's jester--a very fool,
only his gift is in devising impossible slanders.
None but libertines delight in him, and the
commendation is not in his wit, but in his
villainy; for he both pleases men and angers
them, and then they laugh at him and beat him.
(II. i. 142-47)

At the end of the masquing sequence the partners dance off the stage, presumably to attend the banquet, leaving Don John, Borachio, and Claudio behind. What has been seen of Beatrice and Benedick both in Act One, Scene One, and the masque dance has confirmed the deceptiveness of the game they are playing. Both have revealed more than a casual awareness of the other but are attempting to deceive both each other and themselves with affected, brittle sallies.

The deceptions which bring about the Claudio-Hero plot involvements also have their beginnings in the masque scene. At the suggestion of Claudio, Don Pedro carries on a form of proxy wooing of Hero under the guise of the commoning

during the masque dance. Perhaps this courtly love practice of using a go-between is, in itself, a form of affectation which is offensive to the course of true, natural love. But of greater importance it provided a visual impression for Don John, the villain in the plot, to work upon. As soon as the dancers leave the stage, Don John is quick to point out that one masquer has been left out of the coupling. Feigning to think Claudio is Benedick, Don John plants the seed of suspicion in the mind of the young wooer that Don Pedro is, indeed, pursuing his own interests. The reaction of Claudio reveals his concern and bitterness:

. . . . The Prince woos for himself.
 Friendship is constant in all other things
 Save in the office and affairs of love.
 (II. i. 181-3)

His words show not only that he has fallen victim to Don John's suggestion, but also that he lacks any trust in his friend. It is this lack of trust, or his willingness to be deceived, which later leads to the disastrous turn of events in his relationship with Hero herself. Thus in both plots the masque presents an unreal situation, one in which the truth, or reality, is hidden behind a masque of deception.

The final scene of Much Ado About Nothing also has certain masque-like characteristics. Claudio's last words

before going to the wedding ceremony, call upon Hymen, the allegorical goddess of marriage, to be attendant upon the proceedings. The ladies, when they appear with Antonio, are masked and it is only when they remove their disguises that the final deception of the play is dissolved and the marriage dances may be performed. Even the suggestion by Leonato that they marry first and then dance is disregarded by Benedick and to the sound of piping music, so often a symbol of harmony in Shakespeare's plays, the company dances off stage.

In those plays in which the principal purpose of the masque is to reveal a state of illusion or self-deception, the keynote of the resolution of the drama is discovery. The characters must grow into a state of maturity in which they can cast aside unreal attitudes and positions and come to grips with actuality. In Timon's case, inability to face reality causes his collapse but in the comedies the growth to self-awareness and a sense of true values ends in a form of harmony. The whole theme of appearance and reality occurs and reoccurs throughout Shakespeare's dramas and he uses a multiplicity of ways to develop it. The masque device is only one, but in these cases an important one.

CHAPTER IV

VISIONARY HARMONY

Both poetic drama and the masque have their roots in the primitive rhythms of life and, as such, both have possibilities for revealing some aspect of universal harmony. Yet, in spite of the creative impulse which conceived the masque and the artistic vision which nourished it, the courtly entertainment withered and died while poetic drama flourished. Ben Jonson's words suggest the reasons for the failure of the masque to reach the literary heights which he would have wished for it.

It is a noble and just advantage, that the things subjected to understanding have of those that are objected to sense, that the one sort are but momentary, and merely taking; the others impressing, and lasting: Else the glory of all these solemnities had perish'd like a blaze, and gone out, in the beholder's eyes. So short-liv'd are the bodies of all things, in comparison of their souls. And, though bodies oft-times have the ill-luck to be sensually preferr'd, they find afterwards, the good fortune (when souls live) to be utterly forgotten. This it is hath made the most royal Princes, and greatest persons (who are commonly personators of these actions) not only studious of riches, and magnificence in the outward celebration, or show; (which rightly becomes them) but curious after the most high, and hearty inventions, to furnish the inward parts: (and those grounded upon antiquity, and solid

learnings) which though their voice be taught to sound to present occasions, their sense, or doth, or should always lay hold on more remov'd mysteries. And, howsoever some may squeamishly cry out, that all endeavour of learning, and sharpness in these transitory devices especially, where it steps beyond their little, or (let me not wrong 'hem) no brain at all, is superfluous; I am contented, these fastidious stomachs should leave my full tables, and enjoy at home, their clean and empty trenchers, fittest for such airy tastes: where perhaps a few Italian herbs, pick'd up, and made into a salad, may find sweeter acceptance, than all, the most nourishing and sound meats of the world.

For these men's palates, let not me answer, O Muses. It is not my fault, if I fill them out Nectar, and they run to Metheglin.¹

Perhaps had Jonson's faith that the "greatest men" were "curious after the most high and hearty intentions" been closer to the truth, his masques might have fulfilled the purpose for which he intended them. But indeed this was not the truth. The visions presented by the court masques were flawless representations of perfection, but a perfection which supposedly reflected the society for which they were composed. They were "designed to emphasize, not the ideals to be achieved by discipline or faith, but ideals which are desired or considered to be already possessed."² Thus the perfect

¹Ben Jonson, Herford and Simpson, eds., Vol VII, p. 209.

²Northrop Frye, The Anatomy of Criticism, Princeton, 1957, p. 288.

marriage is envisioned in Hymenaei, the perfect nation, blessed with the sublime virtues of a new King, in Vision of the Twelve Goddesses. Though Jonson tried to keep in check the greater and greater dissociation of the masque from the actual human condition, the desire of his audiences to see what they thought was a reflection of their own ideal state won in the long run. The poet and his words became of secondary importance to the producer and his spectacle.

In many of the plays of Shakespeare and particularly the romantic comedies, a remarkable fusion is achieved between imaginative vistas, highly suggestive of the masque, and nobility of theme. They succeed in transmitting a unity of art and life which the masque reached for but failed to capture. There is evidence occasionally of this broader masque influence in the tragedies, but the masque by its very nature is alien to tragedy. The finest influence of its vision or its 'soul' is found in the best of the comedies. In these, the performers move through a series of shifting, fanciful scenes to emerge finally from disorder and confusion into reconciliation and harmony.

A Midsummer Night's Dream has just such an over-all masque-like quality, both structurally and thematically. This play is popularly thought to have been performed for a

particular noble wedding, probably that of William Stanley, Earl of Derby, and Lady Elizabeth Vere, daughter of the Earl of Oxford, on January 26, 1595.³ The bridal couple of the play, drawn from classical antiquity, serve excellently as the stage counterparts of the real bridal couple. The lines spoken by Oberon, the fairy king, express the traditional compliment to Elizabeth who was present for the wedding:

That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all armed. A certain aim he took
At a fair vestal throned by the west,
And loosed his love shaft smartly from his bow,
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.
But might I see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quenched in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
And the imperial votaress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free,
(II. i. 154-64)

From the entrance of the wedding group in the first scene to the virtual epithalamium at the end, the play is eminently suited to a nuptial occasion and lends itself easily to masque influence and structure.

Theseus gives the command to his master of the revels for the wedding revelries to begin:

³E.K. Chambers, "The Occasion of A Midsummer Night's Dream", A Book of Homage to Shakespeare, Israel Gollancz, ed., Oxford, 1916, p. 154.

Go, Philostrate,
 Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments,
 Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth,
 (I. i. 11-13)

and the "fond pageant" is on. The court of Theseus acts as the real world of solemnity and order which frames the dream world of fancy and illusion. Under the spell of midsummer magic, to slip from reality to dream or from order to confusion is a simple adjustment. No sooner has the stable background of sensible custom in Theseus' court been established than it is shaken by defiant rebellion in Hermia which surprises even herself.

The "quick bright things" promised by the opening scene quickly "come to confusion". Within the dream-like setting of the "wood near Athens", even the fairy world is affected by changeling qualities; nor is the work-a-day world of the "hempen homespuns" immune. Love, the theme of the play which was to have been celebrated at nuptial revelries becomes a game of cross-wooing in which affections are exchanged and interchanged. The movement of the action takes on the pattern of a masque dance. Every possible partnering is tried out:

Helena in love with Demetrius, Demetrius in
 love with Hermia, Hermia in love with Lysander,
 and then (change partners) Hermia in love with

Lysander, Lysander in love with Helena, Helena in love with Demetrius, Demetrius in love with Hermia- but this is worse, so change again: Helena in love with Demetrius, but completely at a loss when Demetrius seems to be pretending to return her love; finally we settle on one only stable arrangement, in which no-one is left out.⁴

True love, however, "looks not with the eyes but with the mind" and out of the exchanges brought about by the magic power of the charm placed upon the eyelids of the lovers by Puck must come "something of greater constancy". So with the escape from the dream, the return to reality and the reasoned and understanding judgment of Theseus, order and reconciliation are achieved and the play ends in harmony.

The antimasque qualities of Bottom and the Pyramus and Thisbe playlet will be discussed in the next chapter but something must certainly be said here of the figure of Puck, Oberon's instrument of dream magic, and the other supernatural beings who inhabit the enchanted wood. They are a strange hodge-podge of spiritual beings who mingle companionably within the world of fancy: Titania and Oberon, mythical king and queen of the fairies with their courtly train of followers, Cobweb, Peaseblossom, Mustardseed and Moth, diminutive spirits

⁴G.K. Hunter, "Shakespeare: the Late Comedies", Writers and Their Works, No. 143, p. 10.

of mediaeval folk legend, and Puck, an Elizabethan hob-goblin. The actions of these figures parallel on a different level those of the main actors in the play, but as the level is not a lower one and the contrast established hardly grotesque, it is doubtful whether antimasque characteristics can be attributed to them. The love scene between Bottom and Titania has qualities of the grotesque but these are contributed by the weaver rather than the fairy queen. There is nothing of the commonness or roughness usually associated with the anti-masque found in the movements of Titania or her subjects.

The masque-like characteristics of the fairy figures lie in their very being. They are the essence of the make-believe, the fancy which permeates the entire play. They personify the imaginative far-away pictures in the scenes of the masque itself. They are also the performers of the masque dances at the end of the play. Almost all of the masque elements found in A Midsummer Night's Dream are then part of or dependent on these imaginative beings. Puck, "sweet Puck", is the director of all the scenes which take place within the woods; he calls for a scene change and the scene changes. Full of jest and mirth, he is completely innocent and conscienceless, ruled by the instinct for fun. Through his mischief and manipulation any wish-fulfillment in the 'dream' comes about.

The closing scene of this play is the one in which the most obvious masque structure occurs. As the play ends, order has again been established at the court of Theseus, the "hardheaded men" have presented their entertainment, and as the darkness gathers, the couples parade off the stage in a state of harmony. At this moment the fairies again take their positions on the stage and the finale of the play is their dance and Puck's epilogue. When this play was publicly acted it is possible this final dance was omitted, but it is more probable it was left in for the enjoyment of the groundlings and that Puck's plea, "Give me your hands", constituted the traditional request for applause. When the play was the entertainment at noble celebrations, however, this final scene became the closing of a masque. After the antimasque was presented, the fairies, played now by members of the court gathering, performed some intricate dance pattern prepared for the occasion. Puck's, "Give me your hands", could be followed by either of two actions on the part of the masquers. They may have taken this cue from Puck and joined with him for the 'going to state', or the honouring and blessing of the special guests. Puck may, on the other hand, have been speaking to all the guests, inviting them to receive the masquers as partners for the revels. In either case the line carries with it the thematic significance of a plea for

the audience, private or public, to enter into the world of the imagination where harmony and reconciliation may be found.

As You Like It, which also has its main action take place in a wooded setting, shows some of these masque-like characteristics. Within the forest of Arden discord is resolved into harmony and the characters, with the exception of Jacques, emerge into the real world of courtly life strengthened and ennobled. The inclusion of Hymen, the God of Marriage, at the close of the play is a masque element which symbolizes joyous union. The moment of entrance by Rosalind, Celia and Hymen, "with still music", is one in which the power of the outpourings of true love is revealed. After songs of blessing by Hymen and a benediction by Jacques the couples prepare for a wedding dance. Obviously there is to be more than just the dances to the nuptial celebrations for when the Duke urges Jacques to stay for the festivities Jacques replies, "To see no pastime I," (V. iv. 201) which would seem to imply the viewing of masque dances by the couples or, perhaps, an interlude.

The closest Shakespeare comes in any of his plays to a masque verging on the elaborateness of a Jacobean masque is in The Tempest. There are many other masque qualities about

the play but the entertainment conjured up by Prospero in Act Four, Scene One, must be considered first as it is the most obvious. This play was produced by the King's Company before King James on Hallomas Night in 1611 and again on the occasion of the engagement of the Princess Elizabeth and the Elector Palatine. The masque sequence in either case serves the practical purpose of honouring a royal audience and the dramatic purpose of honouring the betrothal of Miranda and Ferdinand.

Prospero, in this case, acts as presenter of the masque, "some vanity" of his magic art. The classical deities, Iris and Ceres, enter and pay homage to Juno, the Goddess of Love. The possibility that some device heralded the approach of Ceres may have prompted Iris' observation that "Her peacocks fly amain" (IV. 1. 74). The Queen of Heaven calls upon "her sisters" to bless the lovers" that they may prosperous be, / And honoured in their issue." (IV. 1. 105). W.J. Lawrence points out the lines that, in all probability, occasioned the giving of a gift to the Princess Elizabeth and her betrothed on behalf of either the King himself or the assembled guests:⁵

⁵W.J. Lawrence, "The Masque in The Tempest", Fortnightly Review, Vol. CVII (1920), p. 943.

A contract of true love to celebrate
 And some donation freely to estate
 On the blest lovers.
 (IV. i. 84-6)

Also "Go with me" (IV. i. 103) probably was the point at which "the characters descended from the stage and proceeded across the dancing place to indulge in strophes of conventional hyperbole right under the royal canopy."⁶

Iris, at the request of the other mythological deities, then calls upon Nymphs and Reapers who dance a graceful dance for the play audience and the real audience. Now the next step should have been that these performers, like masquers, would break ranks and dance with Miranda and Ferdinand. The opportunity does not arise for suddenly Prospero interrupts the masque and the whole scene vanishes.

It may be remembered that a similar masque interruption takes place in Love's Labour's Lost when Mercade suddenly breaks in upon the festivities within the Royal Park with the reality of death. This sudden breaking off of the entertainment in The Tempest serves a similar thematic purpose. Dramatically speaking, the masque interruption is explained by Prospero's sudden recall of the imminence of the "foul

⁶Loc. cit.

conspiracy" of Caliban "and his confederates." He pleads a "beating mind" to the dismayed couple. Thematically Prospero's "Well done! Avoid, no more!" puts an end to a masque which was a representation of ideal harmonies, of perfection in the blessings and joys of love and marriage. Perhaps Ferdinand's exclamation as he views the "majestic vision":

Let me live here forever,
So rare a wondered father wise
Make this place a Paradise,
(IV. i. 122-4)

jolts Prospero into remembering his own realization that life is not Paradise, that man cannot live forever in an idealization, and for this reason he breaks the masque illusion and brings the young couple back to earth and to reality.

The words which Prospero speaks to Ferdinand and Miranda to soothe their disappointment suggest possible references to masque devices used in the production. His references to the "cloud-capped towers", "gorgeous palaces", and "solemn temples" probably describe devices used by other authors for the entry of masquers in performances with which Shakespeare was familiar. The same might account for the "great globe" which Prospero mentions, or this might refer to the Globe theatre itself in which case drama as well as masque are part of the "insubstantial pageant" which dissolves

when the performance is done. As far as The Tempest masque is concerned it is "the baseless fabric of this vision" which suggests some form of stage set or device moved on stage only for the masque sequence. The word "baseless" itself might merely mean imaginative or unreal but it also could mean having no foundation or floating. If the second interpretation is correct the probability is that Iris, Ceres and Juno descended to the stage in some mechanical device from which they stepped at their cue. Such a reading is also supported by Prospero's reply to Ferdinand's question about the beautiful figures. They are, he says:

Spirits which by mine art
I have from their confines called to enact
My present fancies.

(IV. i. 120-22)

If such is the case, the word "confines" can be taken quite literally.

Music, dance and poetry, all integral parts of the masque, tended to remain somewhat disassociated in the actual, formal court performance. In the Shakespearean creations they become, with increasing skill, fused into the language, the form and the movement of the drama. Romeo and Juliet has already been cited as an early example of the effectiveness of such artistic coordination. Oberon's lines from A Midsummer Night's Dream:

Thou rememberst
 Since once I sat upon a promontory
 And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back,
 Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
 That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
 And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
 To hear the sea-maid's music,
 (II. i. 149-54)

produce a fusion of the sensuous rhythms of music and dance into poetry and the imagination soars above the play into awareness of complete harmony. This same rhythmic fusion closes the play as Oberon and his court, "hand in hand, with fairy grace", celebrate the resolution of disorder and the harmony of love and wedlock.

No play better illustrates the fusion of artistic harmonies into universal vision than does The Tempest. The romance of the far-away, the fleeting glimpses of fairy magic, the sweet poignancy of first love, the charm of unheard music, all combine into a dramatic symphony under the baton of Prospero. Much of the spirit of the play is inherent within the figure of Ariel who, like the masque, has an intangible quality which stimulates the imagination. Within Ariel is the rhythm of music and the movement of dance. This harmony of melody and motion is reflected throughout the entire play from the heavy-footed clog-steps, "'Ban, 'Ban, Cacaliban, Has a new master. - Get a new man," (II. ii. 188-9) to the

light delicate fouettes, "Merrily, merrily, shall I live now / Under the blossom that hangs on the bough." (V. i. 93-4) It is no wonder that The Tempest has defied attempts to transpose it into an opera, for the music and rhythm are inherent within the poetry and the dramatic form. The play is artistically successful because the music and dance of the masque are made to serve the poetry and thus increase the impact on the senses and on the imagination.

The composition of a masque was designed so that the spectacle would impress the eye with a total vision, a panoramic view of an ideal state. It failed to serve any purpose other than entertainment because the appeal became in the hands of the producer, a purely physical one. Whatever impact it might have had upon the mind or upon the heart was lost behind the brilliance of colour and spectacle. There are certain instances in Shakespeare's plays when the dramatic action is held suspended for a brief moment and a masque-like vision reveals an essential human truth or ideal which supersedes the theatre and, indeed, the play itself. For that brief moment the actors, the stage sets, the narrative, all are forgotten and the Shakespearean vision stands clearly before the mind and the imagination.

In The Tempest masque-like visions suspend the dramatic action to reveal the human truths in the order of existence, the acceptance of the cycle of life and the reconciliation of the present with the future. When Ariel, "thou which art but air", can suddenly show Prospero that even he, who has not the responsibilities of being human, would have "tender affections" for the bewitched prisoners, there is a definite pause in the action as Prospero is faced with the choice of continued revenge or of forgiveness. In that moment the crisis of decision between intent on retribution and desire for reconciliation is clearly envisioned. When Prospero makes his decision the action moves again. After Prospero's incantation of the powers of his magic (V. i. 41-54) solemn music sounds as he vows:

I'll break my staff,
And bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did plummet ever sound
I'll drown my book.

(V. i. 54-7)

The lines hold the action "spell-stopped" before Prospero quietly turns his back on the enchanted island of imagination and, somewhat regretfully, faces the reality of Milan.

The full power of the reconciliation at the end of The Tempest rises above the action on the stage as Prospero

draws back the curtain and reveals Miranda and Ferdinand playing chess. Here, framed in past discord, conspiracy and suspicion, is the promise of future harmony and concord.

Sometimes a particular stage direction or an implied action in the dialogue appears to be a conscious manoeuvre on the part of the author to stress these inspirational tableaux. The drawing of a curtain, as in the scene just mentioned, is an example of this. The same technique is used in The Winter's Tale when the rejuvenation of Hermione takes place with portrait-like presentation to the strains of music:

. . . Music, awake her, strike!
'Tis time, descend, be stone no more, approach.
Strike all that look upon with marvel.
(V. iii. 98-100)

The slow movement of the statue can be one of the most moving scenes of the theatre as the power of divine faith appears to instill life into stone.

The symbolic act of kneeling can form a masque-like suspension of dramatic action. After the reunion of Posthumus and Imogen in Cymbeline, Imogen kneels for the blessing of her father and the brief moment becomes a vision of love, reconciliation and hope. Similarly, in The Winter's Tale Hermione's benediction over the kneeling Perdita:

You gods, look down,
And from your sacred vials pour your graces
Upon my daughter's head!

(V. iii. 121-3)

present a masque-like tableau of the blessing of the restored spirit upon the promise for the future.

Most of such dramatic moments of great inspirational vision are not so obvious as these and whether a conscious or unconscious influence of the masque can be claimed is highly speculative. Very often Shakespeare provides a musical accompaniment for his most moving dramatic moments and certainly not all these are the result of a masque influence, but it is safe to say that when the music implies a new-found harmony then some credit must be given to the masque, or at least to the masque as it was conceived. It is also safe to say that when Shakespeare was influenced by the spirit or the 'soul' of the masque, the plays benefitted from that influence.

CHAPTER V

ANTIMASQUE

It increasing, now, to the third time of my being used in these services to her Majesties personal presentations, with the Ladies whom she pleaseth to honour; it was my first, and special regard, to see that the Nobility of the Invention should be answerable to the dignity of their persons. For which reason, I chose the Argument to be, A Celebration of honorable, and true Fame, bred out of Virtue: observing the rule of the best Artist, to suffer no object of delight to pass without his mixture of profit, and example.

And because her Majesty (best knowing, that a principal part of life in these Spectacles lay in their variety) had commanded me to think on some Dance, or show, that might precede hers, and have the place of a foil, or false-Masque; I was careful to decline not only from others, but mine own steps in that kind, since the last year I had an Anti-Masque of Boys: and therefore, now, devised that twelve Women, in the habit of Hags, or Witches, sustaining the persons of Ignorance, Suspicion, Credulity, etc. the opposites of good Fame, should fill that part; not as a Masque, but a spectacle of strangeness, producing multiplicity of Gesture, not unaptly sorting with the current, and whole fall of the Device.¹

¹Jonson, Hereford and Simpson, eds., Vol. VII, p. 283.

The object and intent of the antimasque, expressed by Jonson in this introduction to The Masque of Queens, shows quite clearly that although the name 'antimasque' may not have been used before, Jonson and other writers had used the introduction of contrast or opposites in previous performances. What is of importance in Jonson's statement is his naming of this innovation and his insistence on its inferior position in the entertainment as a whole. It would also seem that Jonson takes great care to explain how he came to include deliberately such 'strangeness' and he prefaces his explanation with a reminder that any entertainment while delighting the eye should also instruct through example.

Any fears which Jonson may have had concerning antimasque and its didactic purpose were well founded for of all of the varieties which made up the court masque this one was the most misused by less skilful hands. The possibilities which the antimasque offered for shock and thrill and its adaptability to bizarre spectacle led to its quite overwhelming the masque proper. Rather than providing the comic understatement or contrast for which it was originally adopted it played upon the audience's appetite for the grotesque, the violent and the licentious. When the antimasque was controlled

as it was by Jonson, it provided counter-balance and variety, jesting about the serious to off-set elegant moralizing and introducing figures of popular lore to contrast allegorical deities of classical mythology.

Originally it was not the antimasque which influenced the drama but rather the opposite, for in fact the antimasque was actually the introduction into court entertainment of the contrast of plot and sub-plot often used in the drama. The tradition of a burlesque parallel of the main action is one which goes back beyond The Second Shepherd's Play.² The greatest influence upon the drama by the antimasque was the inclusion by the later Jacobean and Caroline dramatists of bizarre and grotesque dances purely for effect as in some of the revenge tragedies.³

The comic sub-plot in most of Shakespeare's plays is part of the earlier dramatic tradition rather than antimasque, but when a comic performance or show is put on for the entertainment of the many plot characters, this may, in most cases,

²C.L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedies, Princeton, 1959, p. 12.

³See Fredson Bowers, Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy, Princeton, 1940, passim.

be called dramatic antimasque. The love plot involving Costard and Jacquenetta in Love's Labour's Lost parallels, on a different social level, the development of the main plot. In fact, the entrance of the guilty Costard who is "taken with a wench" directly after the King of Navarre and his followers have pledged to keep the "strict'st decrees" places the whole falsity of unnatural vows and affected actions into their right perspective. This sub-plot action cannot, however, be called antimasque whereas the Pageant of the Nine Worthies can. The Pageant is, first of all, a planned performance which is so exaggerated as to become ludicrous. It has its proper pronouncement and introduction of actors and is performed by servants of the court as opposed to the courtiers themselves. It follows directly after the masque of the Muscovites, or rather the attempted masque of the Muscovites. Although the performers do not dance they do parade and posture, grotesque parodies of figures from classical history and mythology.

This antimasque is integrated into the plot not only because it burlesques the main action but also because it ridicules the false conceptions of the "little Academe." Holofernes is a personification of abstract pedantry, the type of learning divorced from life to which the courtiers

Because of the interruption there are no masque dances to follow the Pageant of the Nine Worthies but as there seems to be a definite thematic purpose in the displacement of the normal masque structure this adds to rather than detracts from the effectiveness of the end of the play. The time for joyous dances will come in "a twelvemonth and a day."

A more complete antimasque-masque structure is seen in some of the later comedies. Peter Quince acts as presenter for the Pyramus and Thisbe antimasque in A Midsummer Night's Dream:

This man is Pyramus, if you would know.
This beauteous lady Thisby is certain.
This man with lime and roughcast, doth present
Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder,
And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content
To whisper. At which let no man wonder.

The unfolding of the "tragical mirth" parodies the actual plot and bears such remarkable resemblances to Shakespeare's own Romeo and Juliet that one might suspect the author of making a joke on himself for the delight of his audience. The rough villagers clod-hop about the stage, bumbling their way through the dialogue and gesticulating broadly. An epilogue has been prepared for the performers but this is too much for Theseus and so the antimasque ends with a "Bergomask", a rough country dance.

When the whole of A Midsummer Night's Dream is seen as a masque this antimasque sequence fits into its proper place, directly before the main masque dances. If, as has been suggested previously, the final masque dances were performed by members of the court then the exit of all the persons on the stage at the close of the antimasque would clear the way for the stately measures prepared to honour the Queen and the betrothed couple.

The figure of Bottom the Weaver may be seen as an antimasque figure, one who has within himself the characteristics or the dramatic functions usually prescribed for a regular antimasque. He is the only one of the mortals who steps right into the fairy world. Though Bottom may see fairies and be loved by one, he never loses touch with reality. So there he stands, the "shallowest thickskin" of them all, a large lump of reality in the middle of the world of illusion.

Blissfully unaware of Oberon's plan for her torment,
on

a bank where wild thyme blows,
Where oxslips and nodding violets grows,
Quite overcamped with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk roses, and with eglantine
There sleeps Titania.

(II. ii. 249-53)

When Titania awakens the first person she views is Bottom who, under the magic touch of Puck, has been "translated" into an ass. Incongruity reaches its extreme in the love of Titania, Queen of the fairies, for Bottom, weaver metamorphosed into an ass. Neither his condition nor the relationship upset Bottom at all. The other players at least show some fright when they see Bottom's state or when they are led astray by the hobgoblin but Bottom never twitches an ear. When Titania is moved by this "gentle mortal", this "angel", when she swears her love, Bottom, neither flustered nor flattered, answers with complete presence of mind:

And yet, to say the truth, reason and love
Keep little company together now-a-days,
(III. i. 146-7)

an apt comment on both his own state of affairs and on the main plot of the play. Titania calls on all her sprites to bring him every fairy delicacy he commands. Bottom is only interested in being scratched. He may be King Consort in fairyland but being an ass he appreciates the good things of an ass's life--"a handful or two of dried peas" and "a bottle of hay."

Enid Welsford takes Bottom as an example of Shakespeare's skilled use of antimasque characters. She points

out that in the masque convention the antimasque-masque contrast was complete whereas "Shakespeare well knew, the greatest beauty is gained through contrast when the difference is obvious and striking, but rises out of a deep though unobtrusive resemblance."⁵ Hence, though the difference between Bottom and Titania, or between the "hempen homespuns" and the fairy court, is "obvious and striking" there is also a basic and natural similarity in their simple, almost child-like naiveté. Thus the antimasque figures become part of the total harmony of the play rather than standing out in obvious opposition. The same chord holds Caliban within the harmony of The Tempest. Caliban may be vulgar and earthy but he shows the same longing for freedom, the same primitive sense of humour and the same craving for affection that Ariel does. As a result he may receive his pardon when he "seeks for grace," and be included in the harmonious reconciliation at the end of the play.

In A Midsummer Night's Dream, Puck is not only the director of the masque but also of the antimasque and as such must have something of the quality of antimasque in his make-up. This quality lies in his capacity for original mischief:

⁵Welsford, The Court Masque, p. 333.

And sometimes lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
 In the very likeness of a roasted crab;
 And when she drinks, against her lips I bob
 And on her withered dewlap pour the ale.
 The wisest aunt telling the saddest tale,
 Sometimes for three-foot stool mistaketh me;
 Then slip I from her bum, down topples she.
 (II. i. 47-53)

Genuine delight at such tricks typifies Puck as "laughter holding both his sides." The dual nature of Puck was probably what made Jonson present a similar figure, called by Puck's other name, Robin Goodfellow, in his masque Love Restored. As an "honest plain country spirit," Jonson's Robin upsets the dignity of the royal court, confesses to many madcap tricks and schemes, serves as Jonson's voice as he ridicules the Puritans and jests at the "false and fleeting delight" of court entertainment, but he is also responsible for returning love to the royal court. His warning of the Anti-Cupid or false love and of Plutus, god of money, might have been spoken by Shakespeare's Robin, "Tis you mortals that are fools."⁶

The introduction of the satyrs into the woodland festivities of The Winter's Tale and the antimasque characteristics of this dance sequence have already been commented upon

⁶Ben Jonson, Herford and Simpson, eds., Vol. VII, p. 382.

but there is another somewhat antimasque touch in the figure of Autolycus who intrudes upon the otherwise harmonious atmosphere of the revelry. This rogue has not appeared in the play before his gay entry at the beginning of Act Three, Scene Four. He is a self-confessed mischief-maker whose first stage act is a parody of the story of the Good Samaritan. His delightful machinations stand in kind of juxtaposition to the happy simple pleasures of the shepherds and shepherdesses. Aside from his exchange of clothes with Florizel and his persuading the shepherd and his son to go to Sicily, no other attempt is made to integrate him into the plot. The motivation of his actions is sheer roguery. Although his actions and words may speed the resolution of the plot, his main purpose appears to be to interject an element of antimasque misrule into the country sports and to mock the characters involved in the main action.

By his very birth Caliban is an antimasque figure, a product of the grotesque, "a freckled whelp hag-born." His position in The Tempest is an intricate one, for in spite of his birth and base nature, he is not a figure of evil. Shakespeare is careful to hint at something in Caliban's make-up which prevents him from being a devil-figure. He is by his own admission capable of love for he returned Prospero's care and teaching with gratitude and devotion before he disgraced

himself by giving in to his baser nature. Within the comic sub-plot Caliban's associations with the simple would-be kings, Stephano and Trinculo, are humorous not malignant. The meeting of Caliban, with his "ancient and fish-like smell," Stephano, the "brave god" that "bears celestial liquor," and Trinculo, the "pied ninny," involves such antics that the trio form an antimasque burlesque rather than any serious menace.

When one remembers that the antimasque involves the principle of contrast through the use of the grotesque or the exaggerated, the parallel established between the two foolish planners and their servant Caliban, and the wise counsellor, Prospero, and his Ariel is easy to see.

Another antimasque sequence in The Tempest is the banquet scene in Act Three which commences with some of the conventional masque elements. "Solemn and strange music" plays as "strange shapes" bring in delicacies for the King of Naples, the false Duke of Milan, and their followers. The figures dance about offering their gifts as compliments to the noble group. The conventional posturing is soon seen to be a mockery, or an antimasque. Just as the group are about to enjoy the repast Ariel, disguised as a harpy, causes the food to disappear from the table, and, in place of compliments,

delivers accusations and recriminations. After the rolling of thunder gives way to a soft mocking melody, the shapes enter again and perform what might be called antic dances of exaggerated gestures and grimaces. This antimasque sequence appears directly before the betrothal masque which Prospero presents for Ferdinand and Miranda and is thus in its proper position in terms of conventional masque structure.

Likewise, although of a completely different tone than is usually associated with the convention, there is a certain element of antimasque-masque juxtaposition seen in the apparition scene (V. iv. 24ff) in Cymbeline. The first figures which appear to Posthumus are those of his father and mother, aged and worn. Following these come his brothers still bearing the wounds and blood of the battles in which they met their death. Their movements on stage, though not strictly a dance, involve continued action as they circle Posthumus' bed. Their utterances, though not a song, take the pattern of a slow melancholy chant. In sharp contrast to these slow lugubrious figures are the vitality and vigour of Jupiter. Astride an eagle he descends to the stage amid rolling thunder and flashing lightning and prophesies the eventual happy outcome of Posthumus' tribulations. His speech, full of life and strength, is made to sound all the

more charged with energy and vitality by its marked contrast with the doleful, hopeless moaning of the first drab figures. The procession of these funereal forms can hardly be called antic but there are elements of the grotesque in their make-up which serve to point up the dignity and power of Jupiter. This instance is really the only one in which Shakespeare converts the contrasting elements provided by the antimasque into the macabre.

In The Merry Wives of Windsor there appears an anti-masque with no masque or suggestion of a masque to counter-balance it. There are a number of reasons why this situation came about. In the first place there are no court or ballroom scenes in which a conventional masque might be performed and neither are there any graceful young courtiers to perform them. The hero of the play is Sir John Falstaff of Henry IV fame, hardly a figure which could be expected to dance graceful measures or mouth delicate compliments. Another point involves the conditions under which tradition says the play was written. If Shakespeare did write the play at the express command of Queen Elizabeth then the author could assume a certain audience expectation upon which he could play. The masque counterpart to the antimasque would be, then, in the minds of the viewers. The delight of the audience

would be two-fold: first in the stage antics themselves, and second in the travesty of their own courtly pleasures.

The purpose of the antic disguising is explained in the dialogue which precedes the comic episode. It is to act as a cover for the elopement of Mistress Page's daughter, Anne. With whom she is to elope depends on whose plans work out. After the disguised performers have entered, accompanied by taper-bearers, their dialogue includes praise of Queen Elizabeth who attended the performance. Reference is made to the Order of the Garter through its motto Honi soit qui mal y pense. The language and its delivery are stiff and formal as is suited to a masque but that what the words say is nonsense and verges on the risqué. Sir John Falstaff expounds:

Remember, Jove, thou wast a bull for thy
Europa. Love set on thy horns. O power-
ful love that in some respects makes beast
a man, in some other a man a beast. You
were also, Jupiter, a swan for the love of
Leda. O omnipotent Jove! How near the God
grew to the complexion of a goose. A fault
done first in the form of a beast.

(V. v. 3-9)

The fairies are first instructed to dance around a tree but when they smell "a man of middle earth" they turn on him. Falstaff, who is attempting to hide ostrich-fashion,

suffers the pinches and burns of the fairies, supposedly to test his chastity. The masque movements which would be expected by the audience thus become antic gestures and buffoonery. Falstaff, who had hoped to use the masque for one of its main purposes, to promote romance for himself, is turned upon and exposed.

It has been suggested that the antimasque which appeared in the First Folio is an interpolated one⁷ but even if this were correct the antimasque is still dramatically connected to the play proper for the dance burlesque serves to cover up for the attempted abductions by Slender and Doctor Caius and the elopement of Fenton and Anne Page. It is also a lively and hilarious climax to the comedy.

The important thing which may be seen throughout this discussion of Shakespeare's use of antimasque and elements of antimasque in his plays is that, as with the masque, Shakespeare never uses the convention merely for effect or merely for the antic spectacle. Most often the contrast demanded by antimasque is inherent within the action or even within a character within the action rather than appearing as

⁷John H. Long, "Another Masque for The Merry Wives of Windsor", SQ, Vol. III (1952), p. 42.

a structure. The antimasque, again like the masque, was to Shakespeare another device which he could adapt for service in his productions. The structure itself was adjusted and changed to suit the immediate purpose and never only for itself.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Before an attempt is made to draw any conclusions as to the function of the masque in Shakespeare's plays or speculating on any pattern which emerges from this study, some comment should be made on other Shakespeare plays in which circumstances only suggestive of a masque occur.

There are a number of reasons to suspect, for example, that although The Comedy of Errors has little in it which suggests the masque, it was meant to be followed by masque dances. The play is a remarkably short one, just over seventeen hundred lines, hardly sufficient for a complete evening's entertainment. It is also highly unlikely that Shakespeare would overlook the joyous ending of the play as an opportunity for providing some form of revelry to round off the action, but in the stage directions there is not even a call for music to accompany the banquet. There is evidence that the Plautine comedy upon which the Shakespearean play is based, The Menaechmi, was earlier in the sixteenth century followed by

one of the famous banquets which included a morisco (a simplified ballet d'action) in which Cesare Borgia acted. As the music rose

for the glorious finale the guests danced
with the performers and the Pope looked on
approvingly.¹

In The Comedy of Errors the simple withdrawal for a banquet at the end of the play is rather abrupt. I am not suggesting that Shakespeare knew of the earlier production but there is the possibility that when the play was performed for the members of Gray's Inn, similar masque dances were included.

After the denouement--the discovering and sorting out of the Antipholuses and the Dromios and the joyous reunion of parents with children and brothers with brothers--the major characters, led by the Duke, withdraw from the stage to banquet and celebrate the happy occasion. The two servants, the Dromios, are left on stage to go through a series of burlesque gestures as to who will leave the stage first, finally agreeing:

We came into the world like brother and brother,
And now let's go hand in hand, not one before
the another.

(V. i. 424-5)

¹George Freedley and John A. Reeves, The History of the Theatre, New York, 1941, p. 66.

This posturing is suggestive of an antic dance and might possibly have been a prelude to masque dances. These masque dances, if this were the case, would be performed by noble or honoured members of the audience taking the place of the professional actors for this dance finale, a situation similar to the one discussed for the masque ending of A Midsummer Night's Dream. The amusing dialogue also provides for stage business while such a substitution is taking place.

Those plays of Shakespeare's which were presented for a select audience, as The Comedy of Errors appears to have been, seem to cater to the more sophisticated taste. Among others known to have been staged for members of the Inns of Court, in this case the Middle Temple, is Twelfth Night. Epiphany was the greatest masquing night of the year and the very name Twelfth Night suggests "thoughts of masque and revelry and carnival."² The highly fanciful romantic tone of the entire play has been designed to appeal to a cultured audience, perhaps one used to viewing masquers acting scenes of the mythical far-away. Even the name "Illyria" suggests an imaginative world. The play opens, "If music be the food of love, play on," and closes with delightful nonsense songs from the Clown. In between are rapidly shifting scenes in

²Welsford, The Court Masque, p. 282.

which the young lovers get sorted out into couples. Although there are no actual masque sequences in Twelfth Night, there is a quality in the over-all atmosphere and tone suggestive of masque.

Most of Shakespeare's late plays were designed for a similar audience, though perhaps not quite so select. The King's Men, Shakespeare's company, took over the Blackfriars Theatre in 1608 from the Children of the Revels.³ Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale and The Tempest were probably written to be produced in this theatre for the more sophisticated audience which attended it. All four plays are generally more elaborate in stage techniques. The possible use of mechanical devices, such as were common to the Jacobean masque, has been noted in Cymbeline and The Tempest. In Pericles the stage directions at the beginning of Act Five call for a barge drawn up beside Pericles' "closed pavillion". This pavillion could have been a curtained inner stage but the scenes which occur immediately before and after would necessitate drawing the barge on and off stage in some way. The use of these mechanical devices is probably a direct influence of

³M.C. Bradbrook, The Rise of the Common Player, London, 1962, p. 287.

the court masques, particularly those produced by Inigo Jones, which were introducing new theatrical effects.

Perhaps where direct credit cannot be given to the masque for changes on the Globe's boards, an indirect influence may. The amount of pageantry and spectacle included in Henry VIII, written for the Globe Theatre, indicates that the tastes of the public theatre had also changed during the twenty odd years Shakespeare was writing. That Shakespeare was by this time accustomed to writing for the Blackfriars, which demanded more elaborateness, may have influenced his technique in Henry VIII, but Alice Venezky points out that the same citizens who

might applaud the marches of costumed masquers through the streets, or parades of tournament contestants into the lists, from the banks of the Thames might cheer a sham battle between vessels trimmed to represent English merchants and pirates, or might admire a formation of gorgeously decorated barges honoring the ruler or Lord Mayor made up the majority at the public playhouses.⁴

It is possible that the guilds and other organizations responsible for these celebrations were aware of the kind of performances the nobility had become accustomed to and hoped

⁴Venezky, Pageantry on the Shakespearean Stage, p. 18.

to provide comparable entertainment. This, in turn, affected the taste of the man in the street. The public theatre audience was also aware of the type and style of courtly entertainment. Those who attended the Blackfriars, when they could afford the sixpence, knew of the costuming and scenic effects which the more wealthy citizens enjoyed. A combination of these circumstances led to an increased demand for brilliant trappings on the public stage.

One of the greatest dangers in this investigation is approaching every play with the question, "What masquing stuff is here?" (Shrew V. iii. 87) and assuming that any of the elements of masque or antimasque appearing in Shakespeare's plays are there because of the influence of the court entertainment. Sir Andrew Aguecheek's remark, "I delight in masques and revels, sometimes altogether," (Twel. I. iii. 121-2) shows that some of the methods of merry-making and celebration which had been integrated into the masque, continued to exist quite independently not only in court but also in public festivities. Some of the dances at which Aguecheek claims agility, such as the "galliard", came to the playhouse after they had been introduced at court, perhaps directly from a masque, but it is difficult to make any hard and fast claims as dance, like music and song, enjoyed a universal popularity. The same might be

said for the use of classical and mythological figures in the Shakespearean plays. Interest in classical antiquity was characteristic of the age and aside from the use of these figures in what are obviously masque sequences, how much is masque influence is difficult to ascertain.

Among the conclusions which can be drawn from a study of the masque in Shakespeare is that among many contemporary influences upon the dramatist the court masque was an important one, but the selection of the type of masque or the part of the masque to be used depended entirely upon the purpose which it was to serve in the play and not merely upon a desire to include a masque for variety or spectacle. Even in the later plays, at a time when some of his contemporaries were interpolating elaborate masques into their plays, Shakespeare contented himself "with the employment of some of the devices which the masque made popular."⁵ I am not claiming that all of the sequences in Shakespeare's drama which show masque influence are completely successful in production. Quiller-Couch points out that the vision of Diana which shows masque characteristics is "the most inept and ill-written and

⁵Mary Sullivan, Court Masque of James I, London, 1913, p. 8.

artistically childish thing in Pericles."⁶ The same criticism might be levelled at the whole play, however, and Pericles is, after all, of doubtful authorship.

When a direct use of the masque, either in part or in whole, achieves in the drama a purpose similar to the masque, one is on fairly firm ground in claiming the influence of the court entertainment, but when dealing with the abstract qualities of the masque, most of which are common to drama, the argument becomes quite tenuous. Shakespeare's imagination was certainly stimulated by his viewing masques and associating with masque writers just as it was stimulated by other contemporary entertainments and by older dramatic traditions. The genius of Shakespeare's workmanship lies in his complete eclecticism and masterful assimilation.

⁶ Arthur Quiller-Couch, Shakespeare's Workmanship, Cambridge, 1944, p. 188. Hardin Craig makes a similar observation in "Shakespeare's Bad Poetry," Shakespeare Survey, I (1948), 55.

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